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RENAISSANCE

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The Autumn issue of *Renaissance* will be devoted to evaluations of contemporary poets from several countries:

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Reports from Italy, France, Germany, and South America.

Reviews of significant books from England, Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and America.

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SEGRETERIA DI STATO

DI

SUA SANTITÀ

N. 196964/SA

Vatican City, April 4, 1949

Dear Mr. Pick,

At the august bidding of the Holy Father, it is my honored duty to acknowledge receipt of your letter of February 14, 1949, and of the copy of the first issue of "Renaissance" which you enclosed.

His Holiness would have me express to you His cordial thankfulness for this gift, and His appreciation of the sentiments of filial devotion to the Vicar of Christ which prompted you to make this presentation.

The Pontiff cherishes the prayerful hope that "Renaissance" may achieve the praiseworthy objective at which it aims, namely, the stimulation of interest in Catholic letters, and, as a pledge of divine guidance in your work, He imparts to you and to your Assistants and Advisers His paternal Apostolic Blessing.

With sentiments of esteem and regard, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

J. Montini
Subst

Editorial

MORE precisely to indicate its true and specific nature, *Renascence* has taken on with this, the second number, a subtitle: *A Critical Journal of Letters*. This expanded title should help to make clear our scope and our objective. We hold that there is a very close and a very intimate relationship and interaction between sound criticism and significant literature. One should evoke the other, and they should join to create a reading public which is receptive and at the same time discriminating. If this is true, then letters will flourish with a vigor that is an index to a healthy intellectual and cultural life.

There has been a body of truly critical endeavor slowly growing up around the revival of Catholic letters, but there has been much more that had better never been written. The usual faults and banalities are all too well known. There has been a general tendency to apotheosize mediocrity and either to praise or to blame for the wrong reasons.

Because the Church was long on the defensive as a result of that tragic schism of Western Culture four hundred years ago, much of its effort almost necessarily became directly polemical and apologetic with the consequent confusion of art and propaganda. The Catholic world of letters suffered a provincialism to which the very term *Catholic* ought to be an antidote. Too frequently the criterion has been sound doctrine and too seldom has it been sound art. Mere pious intention never made a great book. Nor does a sound metaphysic or theology which is not transmuted into the living word result in anything but a betrayal of that very metaphysic or theology.

A more integrated criticism of Catholic literature is developing in our midst, and to this movement *Renascence: A Critical Journal of Letters* is dedicated. It is pledged to bring from the college, the cloister, the library, the study that critical intelligence needed if there is to be a revival of Catholic letters.

In order to give each issue added unity, it will be planned around some central theme, genre, country, writer, or problem. The current number evaluates certain problems facing the creator of fiction: in the following pages will be found four critiques of Graham Greene and one of Evelyn Waugh; another article probes the American scene.

As a permanent feature every number will print reports or "letters" by correspondents from Europe on the literary temper, such as the reports on Holland, Belgium, and Paris in the present issue. Each number will carry critical reviews of books published here or abroad that seem of importance and significance.

In all cases we hope to single out as contributors those writers—whether their names be already known or not—who are themselves dedicated to the best critical standards in the commonwealth of letters.

—J. P.

Three Americans

BY RILEY HUGHES

IT would be inexact and misleading to speak of current Catholic literary awareness in the United States solely in terms of revival. Whatever one thinks of Catholic writing today, it can scarcely be considered in terms of an American literary past. American literature is more thoroughly non-Catholic than is the literature to which Newman called attention in his address on English Catholic Literature. Literary sources in Puritanism, or Transcendentalism, or the Southern practice of the chivalry of Froissart yield little on which a putative American Catholic literature might build. Nor has the presence of what we may call "Catholic regions" as yet contributed appropriate *données*. That Maryland and Louisiana and New Mexico were originally settled by Catholics we may to this moment consider literarily (as well as, to a significant extent, politically) inoperative.

One may point of course to a few Catholic figures who find minor places in our anthologies and literary histories. When those for whom literary form was a vehicle for instruction are omitted, these are very few indeed. Father Tabb, Louise Guiney, and Agnes Repplier come to mind. Are there any others? It is obvious that these writers form no school or movement; further, the fact must be faced that they are not only undoubtedly minor, but there has been in their behalf a benevolence in Catholic teaching and criticism which an English Catholic critic, writing of Francis Thompson, recently called the practice of viewing small fish through a "stained-glass bowl." The problem of the survival of literary reputations for extraneous, dialectical reasons is a vexed question—how great is Browning's standing as "thinker" today?—but we may not, I think, indulge ourselves. Belloc's contention that Chesterton will survive as a writer to the extent that England becomes Catholic is not literary, but the judgment of the propagandist.

In terms of our American past, then, it is scarcely appropriate to speak of the current work of Catholics in fiction—poetry is perhaps another matter—as a "second spring." The question may well be asked: what evidence do we have for considering as significant the undeniable literary activity we can observe around us? The answer must in part lie outside the field of literary inquiry. The preparation for any literary movement is not conscious or contrived. Even the individual artist cannot, as Austin Warren reminds us, "by doctrinal resolves at the moment of composition, add a cubit to his stature." Public events, the *Zeitgeist*, and a body of readers trained in perceptions yet docile to new techniques and new materials may together create the favorable climate. Nothing may be forced

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by resolves. As Newman put it, it takes at least as long to produce a Plato as it does a coal field. But whatever the final catalysts, there must be readers in waiting and writers in exploration. It can be shown, I think, that there now exists a public, not necessarily an exclusively Catholic public, for Catholic writing.

In fiction there are three American writers who are Catholics (and who at least a good part of the time write as such), and all of them may be considered serious and continually producing writers. Not one is yet of the stature of "great writer," but each has approached the task of writing with integrity of purpose. They are Harry Sylvester (b. 1908), Richard Sullivan (b. 1908), and J. F. Powers (b. 1917). Sylvester has published four books since 1942, three of them novels. Sullivan's first novel was published in 1942, and there have been three others. At the moment of writing, Powers, the most distinguished writer of the three, is a "one-book author," and that a book of short stories; he is now at work on a novel under a Guggenheim fellowship. In the published work of these writers we have nine books worthy of the attention of the critic; we have, too, a body of work which indicates that a "first spring" at least is in the making.

The work of these writers would indicate that regionalism offers the best *point d'appui* for the serious Catholic writer. In his first novel Sylvester, a tireless seeker of new regional sources, went to Maryland, three centuries ago a "sanctuary" of Catholic life and still a place whose people are "somewhat mindful" of the rich past. In *Dayspring*, his second novel, Sylvester used the New Mexican scene, a place of "important verities." A somewhat less mellow *milieu*, the New York of fire commissioners, loyalties to "the Hall," and the *Catholic Worker*, provides the author with his fulcrum in *Moon Gaffney*. The small Midwestern town of the lakes region is the scene of all of Sullivan's work. The community of "Baysweep," a town of mills, factories, and a Catholic academy or two has been marked out as his territory. His Eddie Nails, protagonist of the first novel, *Summer After Summer*, appears fleetingly—now older and with more children—in his most recent book, *First Citizen*. In Sullivan's books the "regionalism" is in a sense diluted; he achieves his effect of usable Catholic past by either making his people frankly Catholic, as in his uncollected short stories and in *Summer After Summer*, or by showing Catholic and non-Catholic values existing side by side, as in *The World of Idella May*. The specialized regionalism of the American parish and its rectory occurs in Powers' most effective stories. One of their most forceful moments—polemics raised to the power of effective art—occurs in a kind of regional framework when the Negro grandmother in *The Trouble* breathes the Litany of the Blessed Virgin in French. The layers of regionalism are tangible stuff for his Father Burner (formerly Boerner), who must live an alien in the world of Irish priests and pastors. The American Catholic writer can achieve depth and power by being immersed in time.

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In an important, if somewhat shrill, address before the Sheil School of Social Studies (later printed in the *Atlantic Monthly*) Harry Sylvester set down what he considers to be one of the problems besetting the Catholic writer in America. Disarmingly enough, he plainly indicates that there are no "major" Catholic writers in this country today, further noting, with modest accuracy, that he is himself "by nature more polemicist than novelist." What "climate" there exists—the article appeared in January, 1948—would appear to be an unfavorable one. In addition to the exigencies of economic pressures which deflect most writers' energies away from writing, the Catholic writer, Sylvester holds, must face a lack of understanding among Catholic critics, "so-called" Catholic readers, and those sorriest of bumbler, "the literary lights dotting every Catholic campus." The result is the killing of the spirit in an atmosphere which is fatal to the flow of art.

One solution of course is Bloy's: to write for the Holy Ghost. Or, hopeful of the purity of intention that haunts Mauriac, one may write, as Thomas Merton usually does, for the *avant garde* press. Of course if Catholics, as Newman said, "are not a reading set," there is the little question of etiquette about washing one's dirty linen in public. Just as the caricatures in *Moon Gaffney* were denounced in Catholic circles for the wrong reason—a disgrace to the great Irish race, and all that—they were praised by the unfriendly for reasons equally wide of the mark. Catholic writers undertaking serious work aimed at the non-Catholic reader of imperfect sympathies will find, I think, that they have effectively removed themselves from their proper sources. Without an informed Catholic readership they will die on the vine.

What, then, may the Catholic writer do—or what has he done—in the face of present realities? He may, with Sylvester, become embattled and mount a frontal assault on Catholic material. In "Jansenist" attitudes toward sex, in an unjust economic order, in un-Christian views of the problem of race relationships, in various chowder and marching society varieties of pressure groups, and in the institution of the clergy itself Harry Sylvester has found material aplenty for polemic. He has not achieved art to any notable extent, although when the pressure of form, in the short story, operates, he becomes at times disciplined to something other than a slugger's view of reality.

Although the volume of short stories entitled *All Your Idols* (1948) is Sylvester's most recent book, it may well be considered first because exactly half of its fourteen stories were published before his first novel, *Dearly Beloved* (1942). One finds that the author's major interests and symbols were achieved early. Five of the first seven stories appeared in what is known as the "slicks." The athlete, the huntsman, and the tourist are his chief types. All of them are devoted to violence. In the story *The Swede* (1936), the narrator, a student in a college remarkably like the author's own alma mater, Notre Dame, says of the student body that it "believed in the Apostles' Creed, in the Holy Ghost, Heaven,

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and in violence." And in violence, be it noted, "as a weapon of the intellectual." All of Sylvester's heroes are intellectuals (both terms being relative): Father Maguire in the title story of *All Your Idols* becomes a literal iconoclast for the faith. Cosgrave in *Dearly Beloved* and Aloysius Gaffney in *Moon Gaffney* (1947) come, after violence, to see themselves with a certain objectivity. For Spencer Bain, the protagonist of *Dayspring* (1945), there is the borrowed violence of the Penitentes and the Damascan closing scene when he is felled by faith.

The contrapuntal relationship of violence and weariness forms (as it does in both the "entertainments" and serious novels of Graham Greene) the underlying motif of Sylvester's work. John Cosgrave, after a chance meeting on the Georgetown campus with a Jesuit country pastor, comes to rural Maryland to do field work in "non-capitalist economics." The pattern of violence has been set before he arrives; an "accident" at the cooperative wharf has cost a life and cast suspicion on the Negroes. The work proceeds slowly in the face of misunderstanding, inertia, and clerical bungling. After a half-unwilling affair with the nymphomaniac daughter of a fine Catholic family of the area, Cosgrave finds that "weariness was now his norm." He leaves Maryland, but significantly (not being a "bastard-twirl of a would-be intellectual") not the Church, after sublimating his desire to kill some nativists by going on a brief duck-hunting expedition with an understanding Negro.

In *Dayspring* there is the senseless violence of the "Anglos" who have come to New Mexico to tone up jaded or perverted sexual appetites. Spencer Bain, anthropologist with guts and sexual desires, constantly leading to "unease" (a favorite word with Sylvester), enters the Church without belief merely to forward his study of the Brothers of Light. Bain finds reality and release in the way of the cross of the brethren, but his conversion must (as with Cosgrave) come through sexual violence. Just after it is clear that his conversion, after much uneasy dissembling, has become real, the voluptuous wife of a publisher "raised hand and beckoned with one finger." Bain sweeps her off to the nearest bed, thus neatly killing any Jansenism that might be lingering to his make-up.

With *Moon Gaffney* Sylvester's contribution to the revival becomes clear. His polemical stand against nice-nellyism and what he chooses to see as Jansenism or the "Irish-French kind of Catholicism," at one moment the direct exportation to Ireland through Cromwell and on another occasion seen as the importation of Irish priests who did their seminary in France, has led him to the creation of a type. What was an aspect of Cosgrave, of Bain, and of Moon himself becomes the whole man in Bart Schneider of *Moon Gaffney*. Schneider is the American Catholic sex frustrate *par excellence*; his chastity is "a strange thing, shadowed, unwilling and, he often thought, vain." After a bit of the hide-and-seek dear to slick fiction touched with naturalism, Bart and Concepción Escobar, a South American girl who is part Negro, mutually destroy each

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other's virginity. Toward the end of the book Bart is on his way to Europe to follow Concepción; there is little to choose between his weariness and that of poor Knobby Brannigan, en route to Lourdes with the prayer that he may not be cured.

Part of Sylvester's polemical fire is trained against the inadequacies he sees and reports in Catholic life, part against the earlier "fine Catholic novels"—of Lucille Papin Borden, Owen Francis Dudley, and Frank Spearman—which have falsely recorded the Catholic scene. Both concerns are outside literary form, and as a result of his carelessness over form Sylvester has, especially in the novels, written slap-dash affairs which merely substitute a brooding anti-clericalism for the fatuous pietism of his predecessors. The decline has been steady; Bain and his tough-intellectual boss in *Dayspring* are cartoons compared with at least tentative characterizations in *Dearly Beloved*. In *Moon Gaffney* caricature has taken over completely; the drawing of the great Papal knight and usurer Sir Maurice Brannigan, K.S.G., has all the subtlety of touch of a Maria Monk. "I figger," Sir Maurice (who acknowledges "a special quality in me blood that attracts holiness") is made to say, "if all them Frenchies can go to Lourdes and come away cured, how much more so a son of old Ireland . . ."

Richard Sullivan, despite an experience in commercial writing as extensive as Sylvester's, wrote a first novel stamped with the sure touch of artistry. For Sylvester's frontal assault he has substituted attack on the flank. His values are Catholic values, and many of his characters Catholics, but he has chosen to view both as indigenous to the American scene, as a kind of contributing theme. The short stories anthologized in Sister Mariella Gable's two anthologies and in Mary Curtin's *Pilgrims All* introduce the Baysweep locale he has made his own and the themes of marriage and family. *Summer After Summer* (1942), his first novel, tells the quiet story of Eddie and Anna Nails, their daughter Julie, and the child Anna is bearing. The seasons and growth in the womb become the natural referents of the action. Eddie is tried, is tempted by a nymphomaniac too, and comes through in humble, human fashion. Directness of observation, fidelity to detail of everyday living, and a sense of natural rhythms (at times over-poetized, as in Anna's rhapsody after the baby is born "I feel all full of birds' wings and peace") give tone to the whole. The book is minor achievement in a major manner.

Sullivan's second novel was a pot-boiler, serialized in *Cosmopolitan*, slickest of the slicks, before publication. The author's attention to "nice people" received the sleek setting it usually achieves in popular fiction; the book might have indicated the complete demise of a genuine talent but for the novel which followed. *The World of Idella May* (1946) is perhaps a major triumph in a minor manner. Idella May Clocker is completely realized. The romantic moron created by the more fatuous aspects of the American dream, as American and

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unsubstantial as a super sundae, Idella May lives on after the book is closed. We see her first as she rides in the back seat of the family car, making and living daydreams of Lochinvars in air pilot helmets. On the last page we find her fat, indolent, monumental in selfishness, estranged from her husband, whimpering over her dog, and delicately and vacantly biting the tip of her finger.

Detachment and a satirical stand were responsible for Sullivan's success with Idella May. Dotty James of *The Dark Continent* (1943) is sweet and "all girl," but she is seen through a sickly veil of sentiment. With Idella the sentiment comes from within; the novelist is detached. Sullivan's *donnée* is the nice American girl, remotely derived from Henry James, who, though his Isobel Arthers and his Daisy Millers, was, however, able to arrive at a vision of evil. Richard Sullivan lacks toughness of vision; his view of evil is soft and, like his heroines, "nice." Sylvester certainly overemphasizes the break the Catholic novelist must make with the pietistic tradition. His shock technique differs little from the contrivance of the meretricious historical triple-decker. The minuet into coitus in his novels is mechanical and absurd, but the polite withdrawals in Sullivan—as in the episode of Nails and the seductress—are perhaps equally banal.

Sullivan's heroines have their knowledge of evil at second hand. Not Elizabeth Bond, the heroine of *First Citizen* (1948), but her safely dead sister Monica has known evil. Liz is required by the plot, surprisingly enough a conscious adumbration of Greek tragedy, to become gloriously drunk, but evil as a catalyst is not permitted to touch her. The reason is partly that for Sullivan there are six other deadly sins. Both *The World of Idella May* and *First Citizen* are (Janzenist?) studies in the deadly sins: the former of Sloth enlarged by the lures of advertising; the latter of Pride coupled with ambition. Both destroy, yet there remains a kind of prissiness in their choice and emphasis. The co-presence of deadly sin and sentiment means stalemate. The author emerges from his work something of the "sound, smug, settled old character" the young hero of *First Citizen* is. The truth is, he does not convey, possibly does not have, the sad, terrible knowledge of evil which is the novelist's fatal, necessary gift. Dangerously for an artist, he is satisfied with life, lacks the irritant that produces the pearl in the oyster.

A sense of the strangeness, the moral-dappleness of things is everywhere present in the stories of J. F. Powers. His one book, a volume of short stories, represents the finest achievement of anyone who has ever written as a Catholic in America. Luckily, and at what austere sacrifice may be guessed, he has not felt it necessary either to his technique or his livelihood to write commercially. His stories have appeared in *Accent*, a little magazine of great distinction. Although his work shows a tendency to "fine" writing and is in danger of preciosity, he has happily avoided the "tough" glibnesses of Sylvester and the "nice" evasions of Sullivan. His work has complete artistic integrity; a decade younger

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than the others, he may excel them in quantity of output as he already has in the quality of his work.

Because his best known stories portray the restricted world of the rectory, Powers is in danger of being typed as a limited writer. It would be a loss to letters if his career should parallel that of Doran Hurley, who went from the hard, clean surfaces of *Monsignor*, unfortunately a *roman à clef*, to the inanities of sentimental says-sheism of his Mrs. O'Crowley sketches. But Powers shows no signs of having kissed the Blarney stone, and it is not likely that he will do so now. (Perhaps criticism should encourage him to pass on from portraiture of the wistful cleric; what he has already written of the type will long stand; it scarcely needs adding to.) Still, the rectory world is not Powers' whole surround. The world of the stories of *The Prince of Darkness* (1947) is an extended one, most importantly to the tiger's garden of the racial struggle. It is a child's world, too, for much of today's literature reflects the burning urgency of the child's clear vision. Significantly, Powers' view of the world of sports is one of a world of boys. The superannuated athlete does not, as with Sylvester, become the hero.

Powers' short story "Lions, Harts, Leaping Does" is as *sui generis*, say, as Bierce's (much lesser) *Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*. Responsible for much of his early reputation, anthologized, and widely received, this story marked the work of a fresh, new writer. In the course of its development of a Franciscan's tardy discovery of the spirit that giveth life occurs a phrase which lights up Powers' work thematically. The bingo game, Father Didymus (the name of the doubting Apostle is not carelessly chosen) reflects, is always "going on under the Cross for the seamless garment of the Son of Man: everywhere the sign of contradiction, and always." (For this sign Sylvester has "levels of mind" and Sullivan the direct impinging of object or event on the recording consciousness.) In all of Powers' stories the "sign of contradiction" gives form to the material. The sign of contradiction in things enables Powers to view with wry appreciation removed from polemical zeal yet not from sympathy the relations of races or the ambiguities of Sundays in the rectory kitchen devoted to counting the day's collection.

The title story of *The Prince of Darkness* portrays in unforgettable detail and nuance a day in the life of a quite ordinary man who is also a priest. The sign of contradiction is on him like a brand, as he eats breakfast, demolishing the "rose window" of his grapefruit, as he plays the *enfant terrible* with his colleagues, as he goes to the airport to put in his flying time, and as he diffidently, and not in the spirit of the corporal acts, visits a sick priest friend. The story is divided into the three time divisions of the day; "Evening" is its consummation. Summoned to the cathedral for confessions (because "one of these Cathedral jokers lost his faculties" jests his pastor) he has a meeting with the archbishop.

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For Father Burner, perennial assistant, the jump from mouse to rat at last seems a possibility.

Father Burner's interview with the archbishop is exquisite in characterization and perfect in technique. Event and the angle of observation are blended with final rightness. Every move, every sensation, every "trap" for a man of Burner's raw sensibilities is brilliantly given. The prelate's delicate play of irony over contemporary complacency—we "are all heroes in search of an underdog"—fulfills, as do most of the stories in the book, Henry James' prescription for the novel, a "rich subject summarized." The density in value of this particular scene is in sharp contrast with the ungainly starkness of a similar scene between priest and archbishop in *Dearlly Beloved*. The difference is that between wit and wisecrack.

The achievement of J. F. Powers is an act of public love. Whether they content themselves with being regionalists or not, Catholic writers will do well to write from a public love rather from a private hate. Only then will they come to Catholic writing "of the center," of the bull's eye, as Sister Mariella Gable has put it. The reaction from naturalism, long overdue, should provide impetus for Catholic writing of excellence. Perhaps the novel, after all a Protestant art form, is not the place in which to look for the fullness of a literary *cultus*. Perhaps rather than congratulating ourselves over a Powers, we should not forget that we have done nothing in the drama; we have yet to produce, say, an Arthur Miller.

If the "usable past" available to American Catholics writing today had to come solely from American writing (and Sylvester's dependence on Hemingway is an example of the difficulties of such an inheritance) then the outlook would not be nearly so hopeful as it is. For it is by no means extravagant to hope that the process of ripening may be nourished, if not hastened, by the first spring provided by Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. Bernanos and Mauriac are equally valuable as sources, except that for most American readers and writers they are met with in translation, and they are therefore once removed.

American Catholic writing (as is our culture) is a good century behind the secular tradition. Just as the availability of English writers made it difficult, a century ago, for American writers to get a hearing and yet provided them and American readers with a technique of surpassing excellence, so today are our writers and readers at once hampered and enormously helped by the wide currency of the fruits of the revival in England and France. It is too early for us to produce our Henry Jameses (and American literature, of course, will always, as Newman noted of the English, *have been* protestant and other), but we can be joyously, and one hopes not at all solemnly, about the business of giving welcome and environment to our Hawthornes. In the vigorous clearing of the underbrush by Harry Sylvester, the tentative explorations and sensitivities of Richard Sullivan, and in the integration of Catholic materials and Catholic sense achieved

by J. F. Powers we at least can boast, as Mary Perkins has pointed out, that "the Catholic writers of today are preparing the ground of the future." Theirs is a noble and a necessary work; one should not be stinting in proper praise, nor should one compromise what has been done by calling upon the stained-glass bowl.

Graham Greene, Catholic Shocker

BY HAROLD C. GARDINER

THE main reason, it would seem, why Graham Greene is read by some (and even by a good percentage of Catholics) with a sense of shock, is that he is not a sociologist but an eschatologist.

Sociologists are not very disturbing; eschatologists are. The census-takers who marked down their records when Joseph and Mary presented themselves at Bethlehem were sociologists in their little way, but we do not read that their questionings caused any particular stir in men's souls. Jeremiah and John the Baptist were eschatologists, and *their* probings made souls to quake and tremble, to inquire and change.

Literature has its sociologists and its eschatologists, too. The first write of important matters, to be sure, but they always manage to flick the surface with their fleeting swallow's wing; the second plumb beneath the surface, and the deeper the plunge, the closer the approach to the hidden vortexes and maelstroms of the lower depths.

Now, readers of modern fiction, at least in English, are much more acclimated to the somewhat sterilized zephyrs of the sociologist's world than to the thunders and tempests of the eschatologist's. It is the mere social impact of moral acts that interests the sociologist. He is not interested in the inner distortion or harmony that follows wrong-doing or right-doing. Less is he concerned with the ultimate states that may follow right-doing or wrong-doing persevered in. He studies customs, *mores*, patterns; he is not concerned with the geography of the soul.

Typical of these sociological writers (in fiction) is, I feel, our much over-rated Sinclair Lewis. Though his earlier books, such as *Main Street* and *Arrowsmith*, go much deeper than his recent *Cass Timberlane* and the current *The God-Seeker*, there runs through all his works this element of superficiality. It has often seemed to me (and I hope you will pardon the perhaps unedifying paradox) that Mr. Lewis would have been a better author if he were a worse man. By that I mean, not, of course, that I wish he had been a hearty sinner,

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but that if he had only had a deeper *sense* of sin, his work would have grown appreciably in stature. One cannot escape feeling that his characters are to him merely foolish in their wrong-doing, not transgressors. Nor are those who act morally acting on conviction, but merely an expediency: it pays to be good here and now.

Two elements combine, I think, to emphasize this type of American fiction. The first is the element of humanitarianism. This facile substitute for any deep religious convictions automatically condemns an author to superficiality in analyzing the springs of human action. What virtue there may be in moral action will be considered merely as civic virtue; vice will be only illegality.

The second element is that contributed by psychiatry. It is strange that this science, in so far as it is truly scientific, is concentrated on the innerness of human actions, and yet, as it has influenced creative writing it has drawn authors away from that innerness into shallowness. This is perhaps because the fiction writers have been able to take over from psychiatry only the technique and not the substance. The result has been that almost all the novels that have been influenced by psychiatry have been clinical experiments. Their characters have been dissected, probed, stained and put under the microscope, but hardly a character has been realized. In reading them, we witness an experiment, we do not share an experience.

Into this unsubstantial gallery of writers, whose good and evil (namely, in the characters they portray) consists largely of pastel shades, bursts an author whose black is almost stygian and whose white (what little there is of it) is lucent. For Graham Greene will not be muted by any considerations of sociology. He will not pause to consider that sin is, in a very true sense, social evil, civic disruption, familial dissolution. He nods brusily that of course he knows that, but that that knowledge is not enough. He wants to know what more sin is, and he soon finds out and will not keep the discovery to himself, that sin is evil and rottenness and stench, and not a mere *gaucherie* from which polite people politely shift their gaze.

And more than that. Greene wants to consider not merely the here-and-nowness of the fact of sin, but the ultimate state to which it can lead. And so, he is the author whose themes are not so much good and evil but the crown of protracted good and evil, which are Heaven and Hell. And that is why he is an eschatological author—he is constantly, over and over again, writing of the last things.

This characteristic of Greene can be discerned, I believe, even in his so-called "entertainments." It is, of course, quite obvious in his more substantial works. Pinkie, the adolescent murderer-gangster in *Brighton Rock*, is himself fascinated by the thought of the reality of Hell. He gets a sort of diabolical pleasure in realizing that he is consciously and deliberately putting himself in danger of

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final damnation. He is a truly horrifying character, but mainly because the hell he carries around within himself is still more horrifying.

And the priest in *The Power and the Glory*, that pathetically noble little character—what does he carry around within himself save a longing for the ultimate goal he knows can be his, the goal of Heaven? It was a goal that became obscured at times by the fogs of his own sensuality and drunkenness, but it was, too, a goal that was never quite lost sight of, and which, as far as we can see, was won at last.

The Heart of the Matter, probably his most controversial book to date, bears out the same concern about ultimates. It is not precisely Scobie's sins in their commission that captures Greene's attention and concern; it is what will happen to Scobie at the end—where will he end, for keeps? Greene, of course, cannot give the answer, no more than he gave an apodictical answer about Pinkie or the priest. No author can give that answer, not unless he is writing pure fantasy. But he can follow his character to the very verge of eternity. There he must leave him, not putting him in Heaven or in Hell, but showing his own passionate interest in whether we can conjecture that the character might have gone to Heaven or to Hell.

Now, all this makes Greene a disturbing author. Even Catholic readers find him so. But the reason is not far to seek, I believe. The simple fact of the matter is that none of us likes particularly to be forced to a consideration of the ultimate goals of life. At least, we do not like to consider Heaven and Hell as immediately of concern to us. We face them without flinching as long as we can envision them at the end of a comfortably long vista. But to weigh *this* action, here and now, as having an immediate connection with either salvation or damnation—that is a little too close for comfort. Greene disturbs because he makes us face now what we would prefer to consider later.

I am not, of course, saying that we react that way because we are conscious that we now might have to face the prospect of Hell. I am only saying that our human nature, in its fallen state, is prone to put off to another day the weighing of any final, irrevocable state of existence. The very thought, even of an irrevocable state of happiness, is disturbing to creatures who have no experience, and can have none, save of the transient, the mutable, the changing.

This, I believe, is why some find Greene "shocking." Despite ourselves, we become slack-nerved a bit by reading novels that treat sin sociologically and skate sophistically around any question of finality. Greene is uncompromising in his treatment of both. It's rugged exercise he prescribes for us, and perhaps our arm-chair muscles protest just a little.

But that is not quite all. There is another aspect to Greene that shocks. I shall not be able to go very exhaustively into it at this writing. Perhaps the

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editors will allow some discussion at a later date, but I hope I may indicate some direction for further treatment.

Greene is a realist, and for that very reason disturbs. But let's not worry about that for a while. Despite the fact that the word has come to connote indecent writing, it by no means carries that meaning. It means, simply, that the writer sets before himself the task of telling a complete story, of giving a true atmosphere, briefly, of telling the whole truth. To use the word accurately, it seems to me, we have to consider it as a genus, and apply specific differences to arrive at the *species*. We may have a realism that is naturalistic; we may have one that is idealistic. The naturalistic realist will deny, implicitly or explicitly, the reality of suprasensible, non-material values. In so far, he is not, on artistic grounds, a realist at all, for in so denying, he limits himself so that he *cannot* tell the whole truth. To highlight the reality of sin, for example, and minimize the reality of conscience, is to cease to be a realist. In addition, where the naturalistic technique slithers into the indecent, the pornographic, there the artistic criticism verges onto the moral.

But there is another kind of realism—the idealistic. An author so motivated will tell the whole truth, and that will include the existence of spiritual (not necessarily religious) values. Sin may be part of that picture, but it will never be diabolical or brutish (if such a thing were possible) sin. It will be sin as human beings commit it, and that means that there will always be some realism, however faint, that sin is related to the ideal, to the supernatural.

Graham Greene, I hold, is this kind of realist. The scene in *The Heart of the Matter* which has aroused no small objection—wherein the brothel is visited—if read in this light, will be seen to be such a bit of idealistic realism. There is an undercurrent which says as clearly as words that this is folly, this is a derangement of the order of things, this is sordidness and sin.

This whole question of the differences in types of realism needs, as I said, more thought than can here be given. But this may serve to convince readers that the mere word "realism" ought not *per se* to cause a horrified lifting of brows.

For these two reasons, then, Greene is found shocking by many, even Catholics. Others have the same reaction merely because of a matter of personal taste—they just do not like stories that are grim and sombre. That is another matter. But the two elements that I have been treating—Greene's eschatologism and his realism—they, of themselves are objectively praiseworthy. They are, at the same time, a challenge to Catholic criticism. We can be grateful to Greene, not only because he is concerned in his novels with the things that finally and eternally matter, but because he has given us some good stubborn abrasive matter on which to sharpen the edge of our critical scalpels.

Inside Modern Man: The Spiritual Adventures of Graham Greene

BY FRANCIS X. CONNOLLY

GRAHAM GREENE crossed the border that separates the writer of psychological thrillers in the tradition of the Gothic horror story from the genuine literary artist when he published *Brighton Rock* (1938). Whether the subsequent publication of *The Power and the Glory* (also called *The Labyrinthine Ways*, 1940) and *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) will cause him to be placed with Dostoevski, Mann, James, Conrad, Joyce, Kafka, Mauriac and Bernanos and other deep and subtle analysts of sick-for-God modern man rather than with Dickens, Collins, Bulwer-Lytton and the inheritors of Victorian fustian is now the exciting possibility to which Mr. Greene's present reputation seriously invites our attention. We may speculate upon Mr. Greene's literary greatness more profitably if we avoid a separate and isolated discussion of his individual books in favor of a review of the narrow, turbulent course of his career as a whole. Here we may observe certain predominant and recurring patterns of thought and feeling, patterns which, in the words of one of Greene's short stories, convey a hint of an explanation about his artistic intention, his method and the quality of his achievement.

What elements of heredity and environment tended to feed and stimulate Graham Greene's highly sensitive genius will of course be the task of another generation to scrutinize. But even the most desultory interest in Mr. Greene's novels, "entertainments" and travel books forces his contemporaries to advert to some parts of his biographical record. No writer in our time is more dependent on his immediate observations and experiences or less dependent upon traditional literary influence than is Graham Greene. One need hardly be told, for instance, that after his schooling at Berkhamstead where his father was headmaster, and his university education at Balliol College, Oxford, Greene was a practicing journalist. His four years (1926-1930) as editor of the *London Times* are reflected in his constant use of newspaper material. *Orient Express* (1932) is substantially a correspondent's scoop; *It's a Battlefield* (1934) is the inside story of Marxist factions; *England Made Me* (1935) seems inspired by the story of the Swedish millionaire Kruger thinly disguised by the fictitious name Krogh; *This Gun for Hire* (1936) contains an unmistakable imitation of the munitions manufacturer Sir Basil Zaharoff; *The Confidential Agent* (1939) vaguely suggests the intrigues of the Spanish Civil War; *The Power and the Glory* is a drama within the enclosing atmosphere of the Mexican martyrdom

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at the time of Calles, Garrido, Canibal and Father Pro; *The Ministry of Fear* (1943) suggests the jungle of the Nazi underground during World War II. And just as *The Power and the Glory* was based in large part upon observations recorded in his travel book *Another Mexico* (in England, *The Lawless Roads*, 1939), so *The Heart of the Matter* seems to derive its concrete particularity, its this-ness from Greene's travels in West Africa chronicled in *Journey Without Maps* (1936). Something seen, something heard, something touched, something tasted, the click of wheels, the fall of rain noted, recorded, remembered with the acute sensibilities of a born reporter—these are unmistakable traits in all of Graham Greene's work.

The reader is hardly less conscious of Greene's fascination with film technique. "If I had moved a camera all round the edge of the little plaza in a panning shot it would have recorded all the life there was in the capital city," he writes in *Another Mexico*. The former film critic of the *Spectator* (1935-1939) has constructed all his books on the level of visualized action. It is not surprising that most of them have found their way without alteration (save in *The Power and the Glory*) to the screen.

A third biographical fact of enormous importance was Greene's conversion to Catholicism. Catholic theology is a radical part of his thinking and feeling, the evident principle of integration in his art. In *The Man Within* (1929) Francis Andrews longed for "a peace, a certainty, sanity. I thought I could get it perhaps in music, weariness, a number of things. I have it now. You are all of that." The you is Elizabeth, the strange and beautiful girl who had listened to his sentimental self-flagellation, his confessions of cowardice, drunkenness and lust and never blamed him except to say, "But you always seem to leave out God." "Forget all that [evil past]," she told him before the tragic denouement. "Everything is changed now. We have only the future, not the past," the past which Andrews was always afraid would break in.

Religion broods over the sombre *Another Mexico* where Greene seems to sum up his criticism of the country as a very evil land. "One felt one was drawing near to the centre of something—if it was only of darkness and abandonment." The core of *Brighton Rock* is Pinkie Brown's knowledge of his own evil. "She was good," he says of the innocent Rose, "and he was damned; they were made for each other." But Ida Arnold, the merely *natural* person, the one who knew not good and evil, but only right and wrong, she was nothing, she didn't exist. Good and evil, grace and original sin, the sacraments and deliberate murder—these things gave man theological status, a place in Heaven or Hell, spiritual being. Ida Arnold's pneumatic bliss, her bright, breezy, complacent world of bed, bar, dinner table and ouija board, her poisoned and merciless compassion—these things possessed only an animal reality. They were without eternal significance.

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Greene's preoccupation with sin and grace, the fall and redemption, are even more evident in *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter*. The whisky priest in the former book sees his ignoble ecclesiastical ambitions end in the humanly imperfect perfect contrition of his last prayer during which he feels "an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all . . . He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted—to be a saint." Scobie, the hero of *The Heart of the Matter*, tastes in the confused dregs of consciousness before his self-inflicted death the lingering mercy of a God Who will haggle to the last breath for an almost loveless soul. Faith, hope and charity are the explicit issues in *The Heart of the Matter*.

But if Greene is, in some senses, "the most Catholic of Catholic novelists," he is, in a number of other ways, the most typical of Catholic writers. No one more remorselessly measures man in the dark lights of man's eternal destiny; not even Mauriac is more aware of actual human degradation, the abnormal vices which rigorist censors feel should not even be named among the faithful. The Catholic genius in literature has for the most part represented man as naturally good. Abnormality has been presented as an exceptional contrast to a fundamental human decency. The primacy of intelligence and common sense, a baptized rationalism if you will, the refusal to submerge into the uncontrolled subconscious, the conscious presence of humanistic restraint—these have been the marks of the conventional Catholic writer. So uninhibited a genius as Evelyn Waugh remains fundamentally rational even in his madder moments. A normal surface is always visible from Waugh's most sea-green depths. Similarly the heavenward flights of mystic writers like Paul Claudel are not without their earthly bearings. Greene however is almost wholly concerned with the abnormal. In his books normality appears to be romantic folly, a mere mathematical average, an unattainable equilibrium, a bourgeois deception, an affront to reality, a sentimental prejudice. The "normal" characters, Ida Arnold in *Brighton Rock*, Quin Savory in *Orient Express*, the tiresome, pious women in *The Power and the Glory* who "come to death so often in a state of invincible complacency, full of uncharity" are victims of self-delusion. To Greene sanctity is normal, sin is normal.

Greene has not yet shown us his saints, but he has furnished us with an impressive gallery of sinners. His typical characters are fear-haunted, furtive criminals. One meets them fleeing the furies—the police, their conscience, or, in the latest novels, the vengeance of God. They are cowardly, lustful, murderers. A hideous pride deforms Pinkie Brown; low ambition corrupts the nameless priest of *The Power and the Glory*; pity "smouldered like decay" at Scobie's proud self-reliant heart. Soft maternal indulgence in his childhood ruined Arthur Rowe in *The Ministry of Fear*, while Anthony Farrant's Oedipus complex pol-

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lutes the air with the stench of incest in *England Made Me*. Dizzy Mabel in *Orient Express* is a Lesbian. The catalogue of criminals, each with a special depravity, need not detain us. Suffice it to say that Greene has not neglected any of the ten commandments or any of the seven deadly sins.

Moreover these characters are as unnerved, exhausted and psychologically diseased as they are sinful. Greene is fond of the phrase, "People are made by places" and the places which made his people are decayed and malodorous. Sodden Mexico ("Hate poisons the human wells; like rats we shrivel internally"), enervating West Africa, English slums, comfortable lodging houses, personalized landscapes as restless and rootless as his characters, breed neuroticism and red-eyed despair. Vultures in the sky, dead dogs in the pasty dust of the road, rats and vermin indoors are external symbols of the kind of world in which his people live. They are haunted within by bad dreams. To paraphrase a passage from *The Man Within*, their brains are wearied out and yet they can not rest. Sights and sounds, disconnected, meaningless, tread on each other's heels, trample across their minds till they ache and bleed. Fears explode into deranged streams of consciousness or into symbols, sometimes phallic, simultaneously satisfying what Greene calls "the horrifying human need for ugliness" and the equally human loathing of that need. Greene rivals Freud, Joyce and Kafka in their dark knowledge of man's murky depths. Yet this hell affirms, ironically Mr. Clenath Brooks would say, a heaven. Like T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden, Greene is fond of the double negatives.

For Greene to present his Catholic themes in the mode of the thriller, with trappings appropriated from determinism (people are made by places) and from abnormal psychology appears to be an ingenious paradox to some, to others a contradiction. That the paradox and the contradiction may both be true is to argue that Greene has not yet answered the full and legitimate demands of his more discriminating readers.

Paradox presumes that the most startling if not the most effective way to present virtue is to dwell upon its opposite. The emptiness of vice, the hell of the soul isolated from its divine affinity, the burning sense of loss which terrifies so many of Greene's characters jolt even the unwary reader into a realization that man has a kind of existence, but no real being, apart from God. Greene forces modern man to face up to his fear. Greene exorcises this fear by a kind of homeopathic catharsis. When fear is purged then faith in God may fill the vacuum, open the mind to the knowledge of hope and point to the distant vista of joy. To be conscious of evil as evil is to dispose the mind to good; to induce a retching hatred of pride and lust is to cleanse the reader from his secret and sentimental solicitations of evil. A literary pathologist like Greene is often falsely accused of loving the disease which he describes. One must remember therefore that only the virtuous man can really understand vice. If Greene

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speaks of himself as "alone in mournful happiness in the dark" aware that hell lay about some men in their infancy, he is aware of this only because he has more than "a dim conception of the appalling mysteries of love moving through a ravaged world." His obsession with evil stems from an almost Jansenistic concern for good.

There is a paradox too in the fact that the pursuit theme of the adventure story becomes by analogy a shadowy semblance of spiritual reality. The fugitive from a gang of evil conspirators may symbolize a soul racing away from Satan; the fugitive from the police may find that he is running away from God. Like Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven* and G. K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, Greene's supernatural thrillers, the novels as opposed to the entertainments, jumble God, angels and devils with cops, robbers and symbolic hounds. Individual incidents, such as that of the priest in *The Power and the Glory* fighting an old dog for a discarded bone, at first glance seem to be nothing more than grim realism; actually they serve the more exalted purpose of dramatizing the spiritual states of particular men.

It will surprise no one that Greene occasionally suffers from the deficiencies of paradox. The literary tension which fuses contradictions sometimes breaks down. Some of Greene's central concepts are then displayed as naked fallacy; and certain of his literary devices are seen to be inadequate for their evident purpose.

Perhaps the most exceptional central concept in Greene's fiction is his contrast between the supernatural man who lives on the plane of good and evil and the natural man who lives on the plane of right and wrong. As we have intimated above, he has exploited this opposition in all his books and offers the distinction most explicitly in *Brighton Rock* (see especially pp. 162, 172, 174, 175, 179, 180-81, 292 in *Brighton Rock*, New York, 1938) and *The Labyrinthine Ways* (see especially pp. 172-79, 187, 228 in *The Labyrinthine Ways*, New York, 1940). To a certain extent Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter* is a man whose natural goodness crumbles when the supernatural prop is knocked away. For the purpose of fiction such an opposition is a legitimate device. But when it is overemphasized, or when the philosophical implications are pressed too hard, the contrast distorts reality. Right and wrong are not really opposed to good and bad; the same God who created the supernatural order created the natural order. Grace perfects nature. Natural goodness invites the free gift of grace. Greene's whole emphasis however would tend to suggest that it is bad to be right, bad to be cheerful, healthy, companionable. There is a trace of savage Manicheism in his resentment of well-being.

One cannot complain that joyless sexuality and loathsome melancholy are abnormal when they are so plainly attributed to abnormal characters. One does complain though of the monotony of Greene's abnormality. All of his charac-

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ters are sharp, angular, one-sided, so full of complications that we may forget how lacking they are in rounded complexity, how few are their points of reference to an equally valid world where men are sometimes discernibly good and right. When we resist the powerful magic of Greene's imagination we are likely to discover that his adventure-story technique labors under the burden of explicit theology. Greene's theology does not always contribute to the organic unity of his stories.

Indeed there are times when Greene's theologizing simply defies credibility. Pinkie and Rose, seventeen and sixteen respectively, mouth the continental theological subtleties of Péguy, Bloy and Bernanos with the unabashed precocity of Shakespeare's children. In one place Pinkie latinizes his nihilism in the phrase, "Credo in unam Satanam." When Scobie, a dull fellow decidedly uninformed about his religion, argues with the perverse logic of an Abelard, Helen Rolt, his mistress, rightly remarks, "What a twister you are." The three principal priest characters, Father James in *Brighton Rock*, the Mexican in *The Power and the Glory*, and Father Rank in *The Heart of the Matter*, are wistfully doubtful about the possibilities of even a sound probabilism. All these speculations of the various characters are legitimate bait for spiritually hungry minds, but they exist at times apart from the natural process of the plot and realistic characterization.

It is not always easy to detect Greene's exegetical interpolations. Greene is adept at surprising delayed expositions which serve admirably to disguise his patches of reflective comment. This tampering with the significant line of action becomes clear only after several readings. For example, much of the obscurity of *The Heart of the Matter* arises from the difficulty of determining what Scobie is uttering within himself. Is the interior monologue Scobie's considered thought or his frenzy or a passing phantasm or the authentic voice of God speaking through his conscience or the direct intuition of God Himself? We do not know really what to make of his despair, or for that matter the despair of the whisky priest who also feels he is damned and who, like Scobie, offers his own damnation for the soul of one he loves. Lacking a gloss from Mr. Greene himself we cannot clearly render the meaning.

Here indeed is the hub of the question. It is the very nature of Greene's genius to be obscure. He is a master novelist on a psychological plane—the plane of mind-body relationships, of subconscious symbolism, of imaginative logic such as we have grown accustomed to expect in poets like Yeats and Auden. But the spiritual plane to which he aspires cannot be adequately presented without conceptual clarity, or the architecture of philosophy. It is true that faith is an obscure habit, but the dogmatic truths of theology and the hard distinctions of the natural law cannot be expected to come off exactly when they are expressed only through the exaggerated sensibilities of a Scobie.

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Greene is trying to say some things which are, after all, abstract truths, and he is saying them by means of a technique which was first fashioned to exploit concrete action. Like most artists he is shy of abstractions. Writing in praise of Orozco's murals in *Another Mexico* he says, "It is very seldom that the great abstractions—Maternity—billow their sentimental draperies across *his* walls . . . The Franciscan monk clasping with huge arms the starving Indian in a strangling embrace, the patient hopeless women trailing after their soldiers into the umber future—these represent emotions of pity and hate that one can respect." His problem then is the difficult and dangerous task (which only a giant can accomplish and only a great man will attempt) of finding the concrete universal, the single, particular thing which is at the same time an adequate representation of universal truth.

Some will say that it is unreasonable to expect altogether clear ideas in his novels. Is it not enough, they argue, that Greene is an artist who has a right moral attitude, a pathos in harmony with the body of substantial truth without requiring him to be a merchant of light or a dealer in clear ideas? Others will say that Greene hesitates to give rational logic its rightful place. They will deplore the lack of a trustworthy chorus, a confidante, an author's voice, an interpreter in novels which pretend to offer a serious criticism of life. In the kind of fiction represented by *The Heart of the Matter* Greene could not be any clearer about the fate of Scobie's soul than he is without appropriating the omniscience of God. But he could be much more objective in the presentation of dogmatic truths which underlie his themes.

Too fearful of abstractions, too fascinated by the concrete, Greene allows corruption a power which it does not really possess. This is an habitual attitude developed through his concentration on tragic melodrama. That it is not his theoretical position may be seen clearly from one of his most recent short stories, "The Hint of an Explanation."

In this story an agnostic meets a young priest on a train (how heavily Greene relies on transit to symbolize man's earthly journey). The inevitable result is that they begin to talk about God. "When you think what God—if there is a God—allows," says the agnostic, "it's not merely the physical agencies, but think of the corruption, even of children . . ."

The priest replies, "Of course there is no answer here. We catch hints . . ."

The hint is embodied in the priest's story of his childhood. He had been tempted it seems by an atheist named Blacker to commit sacrilege. By promise, threats and cajolings Blacker induced the boy to bring him a consecrated host. Before Blacker came to claim the host the boy swallowed it. Blacker was confounded. Standing "right under my window, the moonlight on his face," Blacker pleaded for the host. The boy told him he had swallowed it.

"Then something happened which seems to me more terrible than his desire to corrupt by thoughtless act: he began to weep—the tears ran lopsidedly out of the one good eye and his shoulders shook. I only saw his face for a moment before he bent his head and strode off, the bald turnip head shaking, into the dark. When I think of it now, it's almost as if I had seen that Thing weeping for its inevitable defeat. It had tried to use me as a weapon, and now I had broken in its hands and it wept its hopeless tears through one of Blackers's eyes."

The Thing—evil—has been defeated. Christ the Ineluctable has His eternal victory. Those who have news of that victory may rightfully be regarded as less hopeless, less joyless, less abandoned than Greene has frequently depicted them. Perhaps "The Hint of an Explanation" which was written in 1948, marks Greene's deeper penetration into the mystery of evil and his growing awareness that God can restore a ruin as readily as he can create a masterpiece.

In many ways Greene's novels are artistic documentations of Thomas Merton's thesis about the modern world in *The Seven Storey Mountain*. Both men, each a legitimate spokesman of his time, speak with authority on the purgatorial sufferings of man. But Greene has not yet made us see that our purgatory can be an obedience whose joy surpasses every joy save that of Heaven. It is not altogether improbable that this last realization will be the ultimate fruit of his dark and powerful genius.

The Heresy of Our Time

By W. H. AUDEN

IN its form, Graham Greene's novel, *The Ministry of Fear*, is a thriller like John Buchan's *Thirty-nine Steps*. The thriller resembles the epic in that its subject is a war between two sides, but there are two important differences. First, the war is a secret undercover struggle. The outsider sees only peace and there are no visible distinguishing marks to show who is friend and who is foe. Second, the reader is made a partisan of one side. In the *Iliad*, even though it is written by Greeks, the Trojans are depicted as equally noble but in a thriller *They*, the enemy, are always bad.

The secrecy is an added excitement, but the partisanship is apt to make the thriller a bit priggish.

As Graham Greene himself says, "none of the books of adventure one read as a boy had an unhappy ending. And none of them was disturbed by a sense of pity for the beaten side."

Graham Greene succeeds, I think, in avoiding this crudity without sacrificing the drama, by relating the thriller to another literary form, the allegory. His

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thrillers are projected into outer melodramatic action of the struggles which go on unendingly in every mind and heart. Maybe this is why we like reading thrillers because each of us is a creature at war with himself. Further he is a self-deceptive creature who thinks he is feeling one thing or acting from one motive when his real feeling and motive are quite different.

There is, therefore, not a good side and a bad, nevertheless it does matter who wins. Again victory does not finally solve anything. A dangerous attack has been defeated, perhaps we understand ourselves a little better: that is all. A future, as difficult as before, perhaps more so, still remains.

Graham Greene, then employs a distinctive form: he also exhibits a distinctive concern. Just as Balzac came back again to avarice and Stendhal to ambition, so, in book after book, Graham Greene analyzes the vice of pity, that corrupt parody of love and compassion which is so insidious and deadly for sensitive natures.

The secret war in *The Ministry of Fear* is between those who pity and those who can bear pain—other people's pain endlessly, the people who don't care. Yet both sides have a common bond; both have murdered. Arthur Rowe, the hero, has killed his wife to save her suffering from an incurable illness. Through his encounters with Hilfe, the Fascist agent, he is brought to realize that "it was her endurance and her patience which he had found most unbearable. He was trying to escape his own pain, not hers."

Behind pity for another lies self-pity, and behind self-pity lies cruelty.

To feel compassion for someone is to make oneself their equal; to pity them is to regard oneself as their superior and from that eminence the step to the torture chamber and the corrective labor camp is shorter than one thinks.

For providing us with such exciting reading and at the same time exposing so clearly a great and typical heresy of our time, Graham Greene deserves our lasting gratitude.

La Puissance et la Gloire

BY FRANCOIS MAURIAC
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L'ŒUVRE d'un romancier catholique anglais — d'un Anglais revenu au catholicisme — comme est *La Puissance et la Gloire* de Graham Greene, me donne toujours d'abord une sensation de dépaysement. Certes, j'y retrouve ma patrie spirituelle, et c'est bien au cœur d'un mystère familial que Graham Greene m'introduit. Mais tout se passe comme si je pénétrais dans le vieux domaine par une porte dérobée inconnue de moi cachée dans le mur plein de lierre, comme si j'avais, derrière le héros du roman, à travers des branches enchevêtrées et reconnaissais tout à coup la grande allée du parc où j'ai joué enfant et déchiffrais, sur le tronc d'un chêne, mes initiales gravées un jour des vacances d'autrefois.

Un catholique français ne s'introduit dans l'Eglise que par la porte principale; il est mêlé à son histoire officielle; il a pris parti dans tous les débats qui l'ont déchirée au cours des siècles et qui ont surtout divisé l'Eglise gallicane. Dans tout ce qu'il écrit, on découvre d'abord, s'il est du côté de Port-Royal ou des Jésuites, s'il a épousé la querelle de Bossuet contre Fénelon, s'il est du bord de Lamennais et de Lacordaire ou si c'est avec Louis Veuillot qu'il se sent accordé. L'œuvre de Bernanos, à laquelle il est impossible de ne pas penser en lisant *La Puissance et la Gloire*, est bien significative à cet égard. Toutes les controverses catholiques des quatre derniers siècles s'y déroulent dans le filigrane. Derrière l'abbé Donissan du *Soleil de Satan*, apparaît le curé d'Ars. Les saints de Bernanos, comme ses prêtres libéraux, comme les pieux laïques qu'il décrit avec une si allègre férocité, trahissent ses vénération et ses exécration.

Graham Greene, lui, a pénétré comme par effraction dans le royaume inconnu, dans le royaume de la nature et de la Grâce. Aucun parti-pris ne trouble sa vision. Aucun courant d'idées ne le détourne de cette découverte de cette clef qu'il a trouvée tout à coup. Il n'a aucune opinion préconçue sur ce que nous appelons un mauvais prêtre; on dirait qu'il n'a dans l'esprit aucun modèle de sainteté. Il y a la nature corrompue et il y a la Grâce toute-puissante; il y a l'homme misérable, qui n'est rien, même dans le mal, et ce mystérieux amour qui le saisit au plus épais de sa ridicule misère et de sa honte dérisoire pour en faire un saint et un martyr.

La puissance et la gloire du Père éclatent dans ce curé mexicain qui aime trop l'alcool et qui a fait un enfant à une de ses paroissiennes. Type si vulgaire, si médiocre, que ses péchés mortels ne relèvent que de la moquerie et du haussement d'épaules, et il le sait. Ce que nous montre cet extraordinaire livre, c'est

si j'ose dire, l'utilisation du péché par la Grâce. Ce prêtre réfractaire et condamné à mort par les pouvoirs publics et dont la tête est mise à prix (le drame se passe dans un Mexique livré à des gouvernants athées et persécuteurs), qui cherche à se sauver, comme ont fait d'ailleurs tous les autres prêtres et même les plus vertueux, qui se sauve en effet et passe la frontière, mais qui revient chaque fois qu'un mourant a besoin de lui, et même lorsqu'il croit que son secours sera vain, et même lorsqu'il n'ignore pas que c'est d'un guet-apens qu'il s'agit et que celui qui l'appelle l'a déjà trahi, ce prêtre ivrogne, impur, et tremblant devant la mort, donne sa vie sans perdre à aucun moment le sentiment de sa bassesse et de sa honte. Il croirait à une farce si on lui disait qu'il est un saint. Il est miraculeusement préservé de d'orgueil, de la suffisance, du contentement de soi. Il va au martyre, ayant toujours à l'esprit la vision du néant souillé et sacrilège qu'est un prêtre en état de péché mortel, de sorte qu'il se sacrifie en rapportant tout à Dieu de cette puissance et de cette gloire qui triomphait dans ce qu'il considère comme le plus misérable des hommes: lui-même.

Et à mesure qu'il approche du terme nous voyons ce pécheur médiocre se conformer lentement au Christ jusqu'à lui ressembler, mais ce n'est pas assez dire: jusqu'à s'identifier avec son Seigneur et son Dieu. La Passion recommence autour de cette victime choisie parmi les déchets humains et qui refait ce qu'a fait le Christ, non plus comme à l'autel, sans qu'il lui en coûte rien, en offrant le sang et la chair sous les espèces du vin et du pain, mais en livrant comme sur la croix son propre sang, sa propre chair. Chez ce faux mauvais prêtre, ce n'est pas la vertu qui apparaît comme le contraire du péché, c'est la foi—la foi en ce signe qu'il a reçu au jour de son ordination, en ce dépôt que lui seul (puisque tous les autres prêtres ont été massacrés ou ont fui) porte encore dans ses mains indignes et pourtant consacrées.

Dernier prêtre qui subsiste dans le pays, il ne peut pas ne pas croire qu'après lui il n'y aura plus personne pour offrir le Sacrifice, ni pour absoudre, ni pour distribuer le pain qui n'est plus le pain, ni pour aider les mourants au seuil de la vie éternelle. Et pourtant, sa foi ne vacille pas, bien qu'il ignore qu'à peine se sera-t-il écroulé sous les balles, un autre prêtre apparaîtra tout à coup, furtivement.

Nous sentons que c'est cela, cette présence cachée de Dieu dans un monde athée, cette circulation souterraine de la Grâce, qui éblouit Graham Greene, bien plus que la façade majestueuse que l'Eglise temporelle dresse encore au-dessus des peuples. S'il existe un Chrétien que l'écroulement de l'Eglise visible ne troublerait pas, c'est bien ce Graham Greene que j'ai entendu à Bruxelles évoquer devant des milliers de catholiques belges éberlués et en présence d'un nonce apostolique rêveur, le dernier pape d'une Europe totalement déchristianisée, faisant la queue à un commissariat, vêtu d'une gabardine tachée, et tenant de cette main, où brille encore, l'anneau du pécheur, une valise de carton.

C'est dire que ce livre s'adresse providentiellement à la génération que l'absurdité d'un monde fou prend à la gorge. Aux jeunes contemporains de Camus et de Sartre, proies désespérées d'une liberté dérisoire, Graham Greene révélera, peut-être, que cette absurdité n'est au vrai que celle d'un amour sans mesure.

Le message s'adresse aussi aux croyants, aux vertueux, à ceux qui ne doutent pas de leurs mérites et qui ont toujours présents à l'esprit plusieurs modèles de sainteté, avec la technique appropriée pour atteindre aux divers degrés de l'ascension mystique. Il s'adresse en particulier aux chrétiens prêtres et laïques, aux écrivains surtout qui prêchent la croix mais dont ce n'est pas assez dire qu'ils ne sont pas crucifiés. Grande leçon donnée à ces obsédés de la perfection, à ces scrupuleux qui coupent en quatre leurs misérables manquements et qui oublient qu'au dernier jour, selon le mot de saint Jean de la Croix, c'est sur l'amour qu'ils seront jugés.

Cher Graham Greene, à qui je suis attaché par tant de liens, et d'abord par ceux de la reconnaissance (puisque grâce à vous mes livres trouvent aujourd'hui en Angleterre le même accueil fervent qu'ils recevaient dans mon propre pays, du temps que j'étais un jeune auteur heureux, qu'il m'est doux de penser que la France, où votre oeuvre est déjà si aimée, va découvrir, grâce à ce grand livre, *La Puissance et la Gloire*, sa véritable signification! Cet Etat que vous décrivez, qui traque le dernier prêtre et l'assassine, est bien celui-là même que nous voyons s'édifier sous nos yeux. C'est l'heure du prince de ce monde, mais vous le peignez sans haine: même les bourreaux, même votre chef de la police sont marqués par vous d'un signe de miséricorde: ils cherchent le vrai; ils croient, comme nos communistes, l'avoir atteinte et la servir, cette vérité qui exige l'immolation de créatures consacrées. Les ténèbres recouvrent toute la terre que vous nous décrivez, mais quel rayon brûlant les traverse! Quoi qu'il advienne, nous savons qu'il ne faut pas avoir peur; vous rappelez que l' inexplicable sera déchiffré, qu'il reste une grille à appliquer sur ce monde absurde. La liberté que Sartre concède à l'homme, nous en connaissons par vous la limite adorable: nous savons qu'une créature aimée autant que nous le sommes n'a d'autre liberté que celle de refuser cet amour, dans la mesure où il s'est fait connaître à elle et sous les apparences qu'il lui a plu de revêtir.

Evelyn Waugh as a Social Critic

BY WILLIAM J. GRACE

The object of this essay is to consider Evelyn Waugh as a critic of contemporary relativist society, as a satirist of a world confused and considerably disintegrated, as an artist interested in the presentation of Catholic values.

IT IS roughly accurate to say that there are three predominant ideologies in society today—the Catholic and Christian, the Communist, and the uncoordinated relativism of what Auden calls the "Empiric Economic Man." Catholics and Communists have at least this in common—they possess integrated and coordinated systems of thought. Empiric Economic men, in contrast, largely live by unassimilated and conflicting myths, many of them paradoxically romantic. They pursue wild and scattered symbols whether they stand like garden gods in the cemetery of the Hollywood culture (*The Loved One*), or as purveyed in the absurd activities of the daily newspaper (*Scoop*), or in genteel and haphazard adultery (*Vile Bodies*).

It is not forcing the term to say that Waugh's books are preoccupied, on the whole, with *bourgeois* society. *Bourgeois* is not to be merely identified with "middle class," a term of opprobrium in the mouths of many of Waugh's characters. The term more accurately applies to our secular culture insofar as it is an amalgam of nominalism, positivism, romanticism, and economic liberalism. With certain important exceptions such as Boot in *Scoop*, Lord Sebastian Flyte in *Brideshead Revisited*, Scott-King in Waugh's latest book, Basil in *Put Out More Flags*, most of Waugh's characters are the automatically propelled victims of a disintegrated bourgeois society. The ironic situation of the Empiric Economic man arises from the fact that as he reduces the possibility of Grace in the world, or that unpredictable dimension that so intrigued Franz Kafka, he reduces the freedom of his own personality. Empiric Economic Man inevitably becomes Machine Man.

But how, it may be objected, does Waugh's preoccupation with aristocracy connect with bourgeois society? Well, a good deal depends upon what one means by aristocracy. The rule of the best? The best in what sense? Does one mean an historic tradition destined by Providence to be handed down by specially qualified groups? The aristocracy that Waugh actually presents seldom abides by the imperative of a great tradition. Perhaps at the back of Waugh's mind is a romantic version of a non-historical aristocracy, but at the best it serves as a stalking horse from whose concealment Waugh shoots his barbed arrows at modern vulgarity. Actually his aristocratic world is ambivalently presented. Many of his aristocrats correspond to what the bourgeois man has been conditioned to

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consider aristocratic—a synthetic product not performing any organic function in society, merely a symbol of what the bourgeois man would romantically like to be. To the Hoopers of England the symbol might be a peer; to a more naïve and provincial culture it might be the "man of distinction" of the whiskey ads.

Bourgeois society, having lost roots and direction, must seek the sensational and the bizarre—Eric Gill's "subhuman condition of irresponsibility," Eliot's "adulterous mixture of everything," the jazz age and Waugh's Mayfair. Waugh in an article in *Life* magazine recognizes the disintegrating aspect of bourgeois society in answering the question, "Are your books meant to be satirical?"

No, satire is a matter of period. It flourishes in a stable society and presupposes homogenous moral standards—the early Roman Empire and 18th Century Europe. It is aimed at inconsistency and hypocrisy. It exposes polite cruelty and folly by exaggerating them. It seeks to produce shame. All this has no place in the Century of the Common Man where vice pays lip service to virtue. The artist's only service to the disintegrated society of today is to create little independent systems of order of his own. I foresee in the dark age opening that the scribes may play the part of monks after the first barbarian victories. They were not satirists.

In Waugh's own words we have a "disintegrating society" in which "vice pays lip service to virtue." Bourgeois society is rationalistic and ordered on the surface—the machine is disciplined in terms of scientific positivism and the controlling mind is Cartesian. Apparently there is no problem which cannot be solved by forming a committee and issuing a report—but beneath the surface are appalling cruelty, fear, and the unpredictability of the concentration camp and the atomic bomb.

The basic pattern of the bourgeois culture was summed up by W. H. Auden in these lines from *The Double Man*—the pattern of the rationalistic man from whom all the irrationalities flow:

Emerged a new Anthropes, an
Empiric Economic Man,
The urban, prudent, and inventive,
Profit his rational incentive
And work his whole exercitus,
The individual let loose
To guard himself, at liberty
To starve or be forgotten, free
To feel in splendid isolation
To drive himself about creation
In the closed cab of occupation.

Waugh's aristocratic characters often illustrate the bizarre activities that are the sign of bourgeois society in the same sense that the psychiatrist comments on our lucid organizations. His books are rich in the peripheral idiocies (like our man of distinction) that attempt the establishment of a false personality in the

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face of the "Empiric Economic Man." Grimes in *Decline and Fall* is "the individual let loose." His remark is quintessentially bourgeois: "I don't believe anyone can be unhappy for long provided one does just exactly what one wants when one wants to . . ." In *Vile Bodies* the collapse of aristocratic pretensions in the face of the enveloping bourgeois culture is thus presented:

At Archie Shwert's party the fifteenth Marquess of Vanburgh, Earl Vanbrough de Brendon, Baron Brendon, Lord of the Five Isles and Hereditary Grand Falconer to the Kingdom of Connaught, said to the Eighth Earl of Belcain, Viscount Erdinge, Baron Cairn of Belcain, Red Knight of Lancaster, Count of the Holy Roman Empire and Cheronceaux. Herald to the Duchy of Aquitaine, "Hullo," [he said] "Isn't this a repulsive party? What are you going to say about it?" for they were both of them, as it happened, gossip writers for the daily papers.

Lady Seal's dream for her son Basil in *Black Mischief* is an absurd idealization of the bourgeois concept of "the closed cab of occupation."

. . . he should have a two seater car; he would be soberly but smartly dressed and carry some kind of business-like attaché case or leather satchel with him. He would generally have papers to go through before changing for dinner. They would dine together and afterwards often go out to the theatre or the cinema. He would eat with good appetite, having lunched quickly and economically at some place near his work.

Basil in the same book indicates the bizarre approaches of the bourgeois society to reality—meaning cannot compete with advertising:

Seth had forbidden raw beef. What was he to give them? "Raw beef," said Basil. "Call it steak tartare."

Lord Copper in *Scoop* covers, with squads of reporters, military experts, and photographers a non-existent war:

"The workings of a great newspaper," said Lord Copper, feeling at last thoroughly Rotarian, "are of a complexity which the public seldom appreciates. The citizen little realizes the vast machinery put into motion for him in exchange for his morning penny." ("Oh God," said Lady Metroland, faintly but audibly.)

Lord Copper's personal quarters are rich in the religious symbolism of the basic theology of the bourgeoisie—that cult of success, the massive and aggressive projection of the ego, set against an unmelodramatic background of quiet despair:

The carpets were thicker there, the lights softer, the expressions of the inhabitants more care-worn. The typewriters were of a special kind; their keys made no more sound than the drumming of a bishop's finger tips on an upholstered *prie-dieu*; the telephone buzzers were muffled and purred like warm cats. The personal private secretaries padded through their ante-chambers and led them nearer and nearer to the presence.

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As Auden indicates in *The Age of Anxiety* contemporaries easily assume that some "angle" or "gimmick" is always available to solve any problem that arises. Contemporary man is often his own Descartes, his own Machiavelli, his own Dale Carnegie, his own God, and his own Dispensation. Even when the Ten Commandments are revealed as in *Decline and Fall* each reads differently according to his own impenetrable mental world. Lord Monomark (*Black Mischief*) not only purveys two million daily copies of *The Beast* to the listless families of England; he is also a Mahomet with a dogma and ritual:

"Two raw onions and a plate of oatmeal porridge," said Lord Monomark. "That's all I've taken for luncheon in the last eight months. And I feel two hundred per cent better—physically, intellectually and ethically."

The group was slightly isolated from the rest of the party. It was very rare that Lord Monomark consented to leave his own houses and appear as a guest. The few close friends whom he honored in this way observed certain strict conventions in the matter; new people were not to be introduced to him except at his command; politicians were to be invited with him; provisions had to be made for whatever health system he happened to be following. In these conditions he liked now and then to appear in society—an undisguised Haroun-al-Raschid among the townspeople—to survey the shadow-play of fashion, and occasionally to indulge the caprice of singling out one of those bodiless phantoms and translating her or him into the robust reality of his own world.

"The robust reality of his own world" is the unreal result of the closed cab of occupation (the *Beast*) plus success; it is at once the result of the most efficient organization (two million copies daily) and of social anarchy (Lord Monomark's values).

Waugh then satirizes a disintegrating world, on the surface massively organized and controlled, in its inner life empty and without values. The Monomarks, Coppers, Rex Mottrams successfully buccaneer on the frontiers of the mass-minded, become the new ruling class, governing by a tentacular psychology a listless and uncritical public. The sense of true personality—the image of God in terms of whose value the wealth of this planet and of all the cosmic systems cannot even be compared—is unknown; a man is what he wears, whom he knows, what he possesses. The sense of community is lost and replaced by the romantic projection of the ego. The occasional rebel like Boot in *Scoop* walks out on the sorry mess; dim souls like Scott-King walk through the bourgeois society and its totalitarian denouement, through the shadow of death, with a happy and careless innocence. But most of Waugh's characters, like those of Aldous Huxley, are quite lost. Waugh's gastric juices can assimilate more happily these people than Huxley's incisive and savage sensibility allows him. But, though one leaves us to laugh and the other to hate, both these social critics point to the same basic *malaise*.

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Men like Rex Mottram in *Brideshead Revisited* have a highly developed command of the techniques of power; they know the "gimmicks" and the angles. But because of not seeing life either steadily or whole—in most cases, like that of Rex Mottram, incapable of escaping the purely positivist or nominalist level to that of the transcendent truth—they have energy without purpose and terrific drive without destination. Entrepreneurs like the Coppers and Monomarks and their sycophantic circles exploit a situation whereby social and intellectual anarchy, uncertainty and fear prevail; where all values seem to shift according to the news (real and synthetic), the ticker tape, rumor, the latest scientific gadget, artful publicity and propaganda; where public opinion is moulded without its molders ever expressing an explicit idea or opening themselves to the challenges of thought.

The closed cabs of occupation in bourgeois society form magnificently organized entities, but the entities have little or no organic relationship with one another. Such entities employ veritable armies, all of whom devote their lives exclusively to these organizations ("you are what you do") and scarcely interest themselves in anything outside their organized units. Bourgeois society resembles the windowless monads of Leibnitz, isolated monads incapable of seeing one another. The tragedy here is, of course, that we have not only the closed cabs of occupations, but in our fascisms, communisms, and the secular religions of capitalism, the closed cabs of ideology. Lord Copper, for example, insists on giving a speech to his employees who are sufficiently human to resent his fatuous self-infatuation but dutifully have to listen within the closed cab of the newspaper world. It may be Lord Copper today; it may be the centralized dictator or demagogue of the monad world tomorrow as in *Scott-King's Modern Europe*.

Revolution in the technical sense, in the Communist sense, is no solution. The communist revolution is in itself thoroughly bourgeois; it is Cartesian, it is Machiavellian, and has a complete and naïve faith in the "gimmick" of simplified ideology, organization, psychological pressures and cruelty. Communism is simply a hardening and stiffening of the worst aspects of bourgeois society. As Chesterton once said in "Sex and Property," Communism turns into a system what everywhere else is a sort of colossal blunder. As Mark observes in Huxley's *Eyeless in Gaza*:

Revolution's delightful in the preliminary stages. So long as it's a question of getting rid of people at the top. But afterwards, if the thing's a success—what then? More wireless sets, more chocolates, more beauty parlours, more girls with better contraceptives.

Christianity—and I believe that in his great novel, *Brideshead Revisited*, Waugh has seen the point in terms of a rich and complex creative imagination—is the only potent revolutionary force. But it can only be potent once it is

released from its bourgeois bonds. The bourgeois attitude cripples religion itself. The intellectual splendor and social richness of orthodoxy take one's breath away—but apply the bourgeois concept of property rights, of "closed cabs," to orthodoxy, and you have initially perverted it. Truth that is free, universal, and overwhelming turns to ashes in the fierce grip of possessiveness. Truth is indeed a trust; it is not property. Once you believe, like a nineteenth century capitalist, that orthodoxy is your absolute possession, that it assures your status, that you can feel secure and favored above the anguished and confused, you are losing the savour of the salt. Sebastian Flyte goes into heaven before Brideshead. In the name of Christ you have commended the process of turning living things to mere objects, personality to concept, evolutionary and growing movement to static symbolism; you impose Cartesianism on chaos and mistake the result for spirituality. Christianity is indeed revolutionary but its dimensions are those of a Thomas Merton, a Cardinal Suhard, a Léon Bloy. Its dimensions are those of personal crucifixion, of a heightened awareness of what good and evil really are and of the Apocalyptic abyss between them, the meaning of suffering, the meaning of atonement.

II

IN THE meantime we have the trivial society. In a meaningless world it might well be man's fate to await, in a state of acute tension punctuated with an unfailing stream of cigarettes, the arrival of two raw onions, the *Beast*, or the Mortuary Hostess. Even major sins would shortly bore one:

"We want dinner," said Adam, "and a room for the night."

"Darling, am I going to be seduced?"

(*Vile Bodies*)

Because of his passionate conviction about meaning, Waugh has produced a devastating burlesque of the meaningless society. It is Eliot's *The Waste Land* that gives him a cue for *A Handful of Dust*:

I will show something different from either

Your shadow at morning striking behind you

Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;

I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

In fact, however, most of Waugh's fools and ignoramuses are distinguished by heroic complacency. Fear in the sense of the Hebraic scriptures is almost completely unknown to Waugh's society. Its greatest fear is not that of an ireful God, but of boredom. When personality has been reduced to a handful of dust, fear has also become trivial.

As for triviality—are there any limits to it today? Huxley was a trifle optimistic by Waugh's recent standards.

"Death," said Marc Staithes, "its' the only thing we haven't succeeded in completely vulgarizing. Not from any lack of desire to do so, of course."

(*Eyeless in Gaza*)

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But Everlasting Glades did it. *The Loved One*, in its double-edged satire, shows that, if Hollywood will not permit any dignity in life, neither will it permit it in death.

Woollcott in reference to *Decline and Fall* spoke of "the desperate jauntiness of an orchestra fiddling away for dear life on a sinking ship." Waugh understands the nature of contemporary triviality more fully than that. The loss of tradition has something to do with it, the loss of the intelligence—but, most specifically, the loss of religion. A man cannot be a tragic animal until he has a conscience, and a conscience in practice is hard to maintain without religion. As Ronald Knox once said:

Religion is, by etymology, what ties a man to his word, what gives the other party some hope that he will keep it.

The loss of the religious referent leaves no bond by which to tie the conscience of the individual person or of the community. Waugh stresses the absence of this referent in practically all his novels from *A Handful of Dust* to *The Loved One*. Whether the loved one should wear a monocle, whether the huntsman should blow "Gone to the Ground" at the funeral of Tony's young son killed in a hunting accident in *A Handful of Dust* are the important problems where the peripheral associations of religion faintly survive after its essence has perished. Triviality is crystallized in Tony's remarks about the Vicar in *A Handful of Dust*:

I only wanted to see him about the arrangements. He tried to be comforting. It was very painful . . . after all the last thing one wants to talk about at a time like this is religion.

Modern evil is unmelodramatic; it is at once universally corrupting and trivial. It has cancerously eaten into the essence of personality. Bourgeois society deteriorates, in spite of its mechanistic entities being so perfectly organized, because human personality is so thwarted and frustrated. The cultural aspects of our society are dominated by spiritual and aesthetic triviality. The psychiatrist tries to bring back humanity, frequently by the wrong methods, to the chameleon personality of the bourgeois man, fluctuating (à la Dewey) with the changing pressures of the surrounding mechanism. Everything that is most deeply human, including sex (check Aldous Huxley as well as Waugh), withers. Maritain summed the situation up in a famous passage:

In the social order, the modern city sacrifices the *person* to the *individual*; it gives the universal suffrage, equal rights, liberty of opinion, to the *individual* and delivers the *person*, isolated, naked, with no special framework to support and protect it, to all the devouring powers which threaten the soul's life, to the pitiless actions and reactions of conflicting interests and appetities, to the infinite demands of matter to manufacture and use. To all the greeds and all the wounds which every man has by

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nature, it adds incessant spiritual stimuli, and the countless hordes of all kinds of errors, sparkling and sharpened, to which it gives free circulation in the sky of the intelligence. And it says to each of the poor children of men set in the midst of the turmoil: "You are a free individual; defend yourself, save yourself, all by yourself." It is a homicidal civilization.

Destruction of the person is the crux of the problem. Christ, for example, in the Gospels always talks to the "you." "You" has meaning. It needs no explanation. One of our great difficulties today in view of social disintegration and semantic breakdown is that frequently there is no "you" to talk to. In Waugh's early burlesque, in Huxley's novels, there is frequently no *you*. Intellectuals today frequently torture themselves in trying to find who they are; they seek identity. The search has filtered down to all circles. The average citizen will divide himself up as if he were a Cartesian earthworm, willing the separate and distinct ideas of himself, and the separate parts will go off by themselves, frequently in opposite directions. "As a personal friend, I tell you this; as a professional man, I tell you that; as an employer, I would say; as a Republican, I maintain; as a golfer, I believe; as a married man, I cannot say . . ." There is something more to this than just the normal dichotomy of human imperfection. It also has cultural causalities. The average man frequently regards himself as a collectivity of functions, a series of activities around no central core. But men frequently love their scattered and absurd selves under all conditions. The hucksters love to read *The Hucksters*. Men are caught in the mirrors of their own self-created symbolic selves. "Who are you?" "I am work." "I am an executive—a professor . . ." "That is my life—there are my clippings." "I am my Brooks suit." "I am a Man of Distinction—I have a bottle of . . ." And so on, and so on. "Go on, you social critics, tell me more, I love to hear it." A kind of degenerate Cartesianism and Romanticism lead the contemporary bourgeois to worship symbols divorced from corresponding concrete values, from scholastic "individualism." Advertising is more important than the product; a degree is more important than scholarship; the building of the church is more important than the people in it; the social club is more important than its members.

III

HOW in such a society is reality, how is meaning, to be rediscovered?

I believe that Waugh has developed insight into these questions in *Brideshead Revisited*. This work is Waugh's greatest novel to date. It has a dimension and a depth that belong to a higher order than his other works, interesting and competent as these are. His preoccupation with meaninglessness was ultimately to lead Waugh to a compassionate penetration of tragedy in the great classical sense.

Waugh has brought insight to the Catholic frame in this novel. Too often individual Catholics have the framework but have let the insight weaken or

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perish under the bourgeois seduction. Today insight has been providentially supplied to the Catholic body by the convert—by Chesterton, Eric Gill, Graham Greene, by Maritain, by E. I. Watkin. Catholicism has opened Waugh's eyes to tragedy because it has opened his eyes to the nature of man. But his ability to penetrate this meaning as an artist is strictly his own gift.

I hesitate to use the phrase "Catholic novelist." I believe the subordination (and consequently the differentiation) of art to religion should be maintained at all times. Art is responsible to religion; but it has its own autonomy, and is often Catholic only in the non-technical sense that it is human. A work of art is something made in the natural order by a human craftsman, for which he is responsible—not the Church. It is mischievous to set up an archetype and call it the "Catholic novel" and condemn writers as heretics and bad craftsmen when they write something you dislike.

In this respect it is a healthy sign that Waugh, Greene, Powers receive acceptance, for it is a demonstration that a Catholic may present a critical picture of existential Catholicism. We no longer have to suffer under the illusion that we are a Puritan band of saints and heroes, just automatically superior to our benighted neighbors. Waugh's Catholicism is not smug; it does not assume that all truths or righteousness belong to the orthodox. It does not view virtue as an inevitable or mechanical principle. It is not Cartesian; it is not Jansenistic. It is self-critical in the way Catholicism should be (and *was* in Chaucer or Dante). Waugh belongs in this sense to the tradition of such men as Chesterton, Watkin, and Gill—men who could distinguish the different meanings of the Church, the Church in the universal sense as the bridegroom of Christ, and the Church in the existential sense carrying and attempting to transform its burden of sin and infirmity.

In *Brideshead Revisited* Waugh writes compassionately but he flatters nobody. He does not flatter Mayfair by pointing out its evils to itself. There is no context of "tell me more. I love to hear it" about this novel. Waugh sees the tragic dimensions of life. *Brideshead Revisited* has pliability in the tradition of great art; it has a wide range of mood, and assimilates many varieties of irony and overtone. It has the organic power to present a *world*, insular and specific, at the same time universal and knowable to all men.

There is much irony in this novel. One is never quite certain how much of any character's statements is to be accepted on its surface value. The remarks of Waugh's characters, like those of Milton's Satan, illuminate not only the object dealt with but the speakers themselves. Their remarks and the situation in which they find themselves are frequently ambivalent.

Is there not an ambivalence in *Brideshead's* character? How should one interpret his solidity? Does the solidity arise from a clear conscience and a sense of right? Or is his lack of anguish a serious spiritual deficiency? Will his drunk,

effeminate brother go into heaven before him? Sebastian thus speaks of his brother to Captain Ryder:

"He looks normal enough."

"Oh, but he's not. If you only knew, he's much the craziest of us, only it doesn't come out at all. He's all twisted inside. He wanted to be a priest, you know."

"I didn't."

"I still think he does. He nearly became a Jesuit, straight from Stonyhurst. It was awful for Mummy."

Brideshead, perhaps because of the rigidity of his education, manages to be the most socially normal in the family. He eventually marries Beryl, "a woman of strict Catholic principle fortified by the prejudices of the Middle Classes." Brideshead has no imagination, but his orthodoxy is sound and unvarnished, and if it shocks, well it shocks like a natural law, like a logical demonstration.

"I hope it is dipsomania. That is simply a great misfortune that we must all help him to bear. What I used to fear was that he got drunk deliberately when he liked because he liked."

"That's exactly what he did—what we both did."

"I can keep him to that, if only your mother would trust me. If you worry him with a keeper and cures he'll be a physical wreck in a few years."

"There's nothing wrong in being a physical wreck you know. There's no moral obligation to be Postmaster-General or Master of Foxhounds or to live to walk ten miles or so."

"*Wrong*," I said. "*Moral obligation*—now you're back at religion again."

"I never left it," said Brideshead.

"D'you know, Bridey, if I ever felt for a moment like becoming a Catholic, I should only have to talk to you for five minutes to be cured. You seem to reduce what seem quite sensible propositions to stark nonsense."

He gives doctrine, pure and undefiled, but his knowledge in its context requires more "insight," more "imagination."

Lady Marchmain is particularly an ambivalent character. She is a unique blend of charm and poison; her poison has an enveloping aggressive maternalism. The weakness of Sebastian's character results from unusual psychological pressures, and he is redeemed by the capacity to give himself. The relation of mother and son runs as a motif throughout the book and is integrated with skilled psychology. The intellectuality of Sebastian crippled by infantilism and narcissism is no adequate balance to her pervading influence.

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The aesthete, Anthony Blance, "as foreign as a Martian," "ageless as a lizard," has thus characterized the Marchmains, largely the creation of the mother:

"I forget if you know his family. Now there, my dear, is a subject for the poet, for the poet of the future who must be also a psychoanalyst—and perhaps a diabolist, too."

Lady Marchmain has ruined her husband as well as her son. Again Anthony Blanche:

"And that Reinhardt nun, my dear, has destroyed him—but utterly. He daren't show his great purple face anywhere. He is the last, historic, authentic case of someone being hounded out of society."

As for her lovers—"she sucks their blood." "It's witchcraft." Ryder on meeting her at Oxford felt "strangled with charm." She has destroyed Sir Adrian Porson, England's only great poet. But she's Catholic in a schizophrenic sort of way. She insists on going to Church in Venice—"Venice is the *one* town in Italy where *no one* ever *has* gone to church." At Oxford she is enlisting the services of Monsignor Bell as a spiritual watchdog for her son.

The liaison that this old aristocratic family holds with the dynamicism and grandeur of Catholicism is through conscience, feeble and attenuated, but capable of sharp revivals. They are not better morally than other people; by objective standards the family in spite of its antiquarian nostalgia, its baroque opulence, is quite decadent. Catholicism might express "a coherent philosophical system and intransigent historical claims" but its influence had not been sufficient to guard this particular family from the seductions of power and charm. Thus in "Arcadia" Sebastian conversed with Ryder:

"Oh dear, it's very difficult being a Catholic."

"Does it make much difference to you?"

"Of course. All the time."

"Well, I can't say I've noticed it. Are you struggling against temptation? You don't seem much more virtuous than me."

"I'm very much wicked," said Sebastian indignantly.

It is because Sebastian counted conscience among the "intruders" to Arcadia that his days were numbered.

There has been as much discussion about the problem of Grace in this book as in Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*. The boundaries of Grace and Free Will mingle and merge and it is a bold theologian who will attempt to draw a line. The Catholic position has maintained that Grace is necessary to salvation but cooperation with Grace on the part of the person is also imperative. That principle derived from the historical debate with Lutheranism. The temptation of the Catholic in this matter is quite the reverse of the Puritan. The Puritan too readily assumes that salvation is improbable and at least exclusive; the

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Catholic (I omit Jansenists) too easily assumes that salvation, in a crowded tribal sense, will be secured by the powerful mediation of the Church, so that he can be careless about the details. The Puritan tends to be hard; the Catholic sentimental.

But the wholesale redemption of nymphomaniac, erring husband, homosexual, adulteress, if the book is viewed on a logical level rather than in terms of artistic illusion, would impose on credulity. It is as easy to believe in these redemptions as that all of Faulkner's or Farrell's characters could be saved. And the Marchmains have none of the excuses of poverty. It may be easy to see that Sebastian will be more beloved of God than Brideshead. Cold righteousness may not weigh favorably in the scales with generous sin. Still there is perhaps an element more specifically "Gothic" than "Catholic" in this type of approach:

One can have no idea what the suffering may be, to be maimed as he is—n dignity, no will power.

The danger of misunderstanding the road to sanctity is greater here than in Bernanos. Bernanos generally indicates that any character with a trace of sanctity will be crucified automatically by every other character. While this view is no encouragement to the rest of us to be virtuous, nevertheless the Bernanos character is doing good, whereas Sebastian's life is at the best ambiguous. If virtue in Bernanos is interpreted as too difficult of attainment, in Waugh's novel perhaps it appears too easy.

The subtitle of Book II of *Brideshead Revisited* is "A Twitch upon the Thread." It is an echo of the idea found in the religious poetry of the seventeenth century as, for example, Herbert's

Yet through the labyrinths, not my groveling wit,
But Thy silk twist let down from heaven to me,
Did both conduct and teach me how by it
To climb to Thee.

It is to be kept in mind that Sebastian even in his lowest degradation has constructive energy—he has the energy of hope. Anthony Blanche, on the other hand, has the cold despair of the damned. He symbolized himself in the lines he quoted from Eliot:

I, Tiresias, have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed,
I have sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.

Two men commit much the same sins—one is saved and one is damned. The novel indicates the logic of the difference.

As a skilled narrator Waugh makes the deathbed scene of Lord Marchmain tensely exciting. Grace again works tirelessly for the salvation of souls. But I

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have more difficulty in accepting Lord Marchmain's cooperation with Grace than Sebastian's. Perhaps Waugh is not so convincing here as he is in the portrayal of the redemptive quality of Sebastian's suffering. Amid his nostalgic meanderings, Lord Marchmain does indicate a rather complete complacency:

I have lived carefully, sheltered myself from the cold winds, eaten moderately of what was in season, drunk fine claret, slept in my own sheets; I shall live long.

In *Brideshead Revisited* a great theme is presented that leads up to question, as in Kafka, the relation of the natural to the supernatural, to rediscover in an objective and non-sentimental way the wonder of the spiritual world. This rediscovery is a necessary preliminary to a new sense of glory, to a new implementation of Christian Humanism.

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I SIT at my typewriter here—underneath me is my chair, the floor, the cellar, the center of the earth, China perhaps, beyond China the stratosphere; beyond the stratosphere . . . well, I can visualize the infinite extension of the Romantics. I am sustained by all of these in the purely physical sense. Yet theologians tell me that all these sprang from nothing; God created out of nothing. It is God who sustains all these—who sustains me. It is God whom I am ultimately fit to contemplate. It should be my business to learn to know God. But as Merton's autobiography recently points out, contemporary social environment does not greatly help one to this end. The closed cab of occupation, the monad world, destroys the motivation for the mystical leap.

It might well be argued that a work of annihilation is necessary before the splendor of the Christian revelation can shine again; the bonds of Babylonian captivity to the bourgeois culture must be severed. The satirist must do his work so that the poet may be reborn to perceive the splendor of reality without perversion or sentimentality.

Waugh is still a young man, and his sense of human character has been steadily deepening. He has progressed from the burlesque comedy of types to the complex and compassionate portrayal of individuated character. May we expect a more explicit sense of glory in his further works? For in Waugh is a deep sensitivity and he has the poet's capacity for synthesis and imagery as so many beautiful passages in *Edmund Campion* or *Brideshead Revisited* demonstrate. Satire is salutary and inevitable in our society; but satire is dry. Christians also need the vision of the Mystical Rose above the arid sands of our neopaganism.

The Catholic Revival of Letters in Holland and Belgium

I. HOLLAND

BY A. VAN DUINKERKE

THE Catholic Renaissance in 19th century Holland, although in many points similar to the English one, differs in that it had no great converts, such as Newman, rich in culture. Everything had to grow out of our own Catholic roots, so long (from 1579 to 1796) kept in a state of unfruitfulness by the Calvinistic state. It must be understood that even Cornelius Broere, Joseph Alberdingh, Thym and Schaepman, who were the pioneers of that Catholic emancipation, did not take a large part in the cultural life of their country and failed to see that the periodical *Van onzen tyd* (*Our Own Time*) which appeared in 1900, headed by a group of contemporary Catholic artists, was a revolutionary one. It meant that Catholics were no longer to keep behind their fellow countrymen of other denominations. The most characteristic literary figure of that generation was Marie Koenen, a novelist of talent, who was the author of many epics, centering around Catholic family life, brave Christian motherhood, and childlike feelings as they are found in the southern part of the country.

One can say that the generation of 1900 prepared the way for all the other generations which just before or just after the first World War came to the forefront of the artistic and literary life. The three most significant Catholic periodicals which appeared between the two world wars were *De Beiaard* (*The Chimes*), *Roping* (*Vocation*), and *De Gemeenschap* (*Community*). The last of the above, established in 1925, was most vital. It expressed in its very title the longing of all European youth at that time for brotherhood. It even carried the characteristic subtitle *Tydschrift voor katholieke Reconstructie* (*Periodical for Catholic Reconstruction*).

Looking backwards to the great quantity of Catholic short stories, novels, poetry, literary and apologetic essays which were produced between the two wars, one can see that a very remarkable contribution has been given by Catholics to the literature of Holland, so much so that it is impossible to write an objective history of modern Dutch letters without taking into account the Catholic contribution. At least some names and genres should be pointed out in this connection: Jan Engelman, a pure lyrical musical talent, devoted to old religious songs and earthly love poems; Anton Coolen, the most important novelist, widely read over the whole country and in Germany, the background

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of whose stories is almost invariably the opposition between pure country life and the degraded life of industrial centers; and Albert Kuyle, a short story teller of a very modern type.

On the whole, however, it should be admitted that the bulk of Catholic writing between the two wars is too much interwoven with the actuality of the spiritual life in the country to be fully enjoyed by a foreigner who is not familiar with the Dutch background. Although not directly connected with strictly creative literary work, one further point should be noted: there has been going on for years through intimate conjunction of efforts of Flemish and Dutch scholars, a deep searching into the ancient ascetical and mystical literature of the Low Countries. A periodical called *Ons geestelijk (Our Spiritual Heritage)* is wholly devoted to the study of the Flemish mystics and the modern Dutch devotional writers with the result that not only a deep consciousness of our spiritual sources has been gained for many but also that the contemporary religious lyric seems to be very much under the influence of the past.

One of the most religious poets, a convert from Jansenism to Catholicism, is Gabriel Smit. He is the author of very remarkable songs about the Blessed Virgin, Christmas and Easter liturgy, and also of Biblical psalms and hymns. Purposely avoiding a personal tone in this religious poetry, he intends it to be the voice of the Catholic people itself. However, under the influence of World War II, the accent of his psalms became more personal, and since 1945, being widely read in Kierkegaard and Pascal, he has developed a sort of Christian existentialism, of which his latest poetry is the perfect expression.

Catholic post-war artists have not yet founded a new periodical. This seems to be explained by the economic crisis, but talented writers are peeping out everywhere. If one collective name is required, one should say that they are the Catholic poets of the atomic age. Robert Franquinet, who already started writing before the war, wrote a "Hymn in the Age of the Atomic Power"; Michel Van der Plas described the downfall of the world as a great theater show, with the angels as dancing girls and God's anger-trumpets as mingled in an awful orchestral finale.

This poetry is, however, not written in the tone of melancholy or despair which characterizes many modern works created by unbelievers; on the contrary, an accent of faith and confidence in God's grace is heard throughout this Catholic poetry, which even attests to a sense of supernatural humor, unattainable by those who do not share our faith. There is a very humorous modern Catholic author in prose, Godfried Bomans, who is very popular just now throughout Holland, on account of his portrayal of the tragic-comic adventures of Pa Pinkelman and Aunt Pollewop. These good and simple Catholic people, notwithstanding all the tragic circumstances in which they live, keep their faith in God and are happy, knowing that Providence cares for them and acts towards them

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with the best of intentions. They remind one of Saint Philip Neri, the Saint-humorist, as Goethe called him, who was so humorous just because he took one thing really seriously: God.

II. BELGIUM: THE FLEMISH CONTRIBUTION

BY A. WESTERLINCK

BELGIUM is a bilingual, even trilingual country: French, Flemish, and German are spoken and each language has its own literary production.

Except for some achievements of non-Catholic authors such as Maeterlinck and Verhaeren, who though Flemish by birth and temperament wrote in French, Belgian literature is not very well known in the United States. Almost no attention seems to have been paid to the Catholic revival of letters in progress since the beginning of this century. In this connection it should be said that the dissertation on Henri Davignon, written by Sister Marguerite Félicie Inial at the Catholic University of America in 1948 shows a very remarkable initiative towards inaugurating a more familiar comprehension by American scholars of Catholic Belgian letters of French expression. However, it is not with the French-Belgian Catholic revival that the following survey is concerned, but with the Renaissance of Catholic letters in the Flemish part of the country. This section is most intimately related to Holland; indeed, one and the same language and literature flourish on both sides of the boundaries of Holland and Belgium.

At the end of the 19th century, Catholic literature in Flanders came to a high development, with three figures representative of the province of West-Flanders, where the medieval Christian spirit of our people has been best preserved: Hupo Verriest, Albrecht Rodenbach, and Guido Gezelle. The latter was the most original poetic genius our literature ever produced. Highly natural and melodious was the flow of his gentle verse. Human life and still more nature in all its diversified appearances were to him a world of symbols, all pointing to God, Church, and eternal life. If any one in the 19th century incarnated the very soul of Flanders, as it was revealed in the great Flemish painting and mysticism of the Middle Ages, it was Gezelle who did so by his wonderful songs. He, however, looked too much back to the past to become a leader of the 20th century youth. In the last decade of the 19th century was born a new movement called "Van nu en straks" which intended to penetrate Flemish literature with the ideas of modern European culture, to which it had remained a stranger for centuries. Emerson, Carlyle, Whitman, Nietzsche, Stirner, Ibsen, French decadents and naturalists gradually gained influence. The purpose of the "Van nu en straks" movement was to reconcile modern Europeanism with the values of Flemish tradition. From a Catholic point of view it did not succeed because most of the disciples were agnostics. Catholic authors like Prosper van Langendonck, Karel van de Woestijne and Stijn Streuvels, who backed the movement

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and expressed a Christian conception of life in their important works, could not prevent this loosening of modern Flemish literature from Christian tradition.

About the beginning of this century a Catholic revival was aimed at in three Catholic periodicals: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort*, *Jong Dietschland*, and *Vlaamsche Arbeid*. The many-sided dramatist and essayist Cyriel Verschaeve, the critic Persijn, the poet A. Van Cauwelaert and a group of less important talents took an active part in this renaissance. Apart from any desire to revive Catholic literature, the rural story remained morally sound but was indifferent towards all social and philosophical problems of the time. Without any aim at universality it depicted romantically the natural life of country folk and the bourgeois in provincial towns. Initiated in the 19th century by Henry Conscience, this traditional novel genre found a brilliant revival with Felix Timmermans and Ernest Claes. It is interesting to remark that those more provincial authors of our country contributed most to the fame of our literature in Europe, through innumerable translations, especially in German. After the first World War there awoke a young generation which was deeply shocked by the brutality of the butchery of human beings and dreamt of a world reform. The desire for a social and religious transformation of society according to the spirit of the Gospel lived strongly in the poetry of Wies Moens, Marnix Gijsen and Karel van der Oever. The same humanitarian, Christian and romantic inspiration was to be found in the work of prose writers like Anton Van de Velde and Ernest Van der Hallen.

About 1930, however, that idealistic dream did not hold with many Catholic poets against the impact of defiling reality. The crisis of this community-art led most of the younger poets to tragically shaded poetry with strongly individualistic preoccupations. Care for the personal fate of the human being dominates the poems of A. Demedts, P. G. Bucorinx, R. Verbeeck, Albe, and others. It is our conviction that this modern Catholic poetry, except for some specimens, owing to a lack of originality in the handling of the poetical language and especially a want of any larger view of life, will not live long.

Since 1930 the Catholic novel has taken a development which shows an eclecticism without any sense of direction. Maurice Roelants writes well-styled and refined novels, in which the formula was taken from the school of the French psychological novel and in which he defends a plain art of living, limited but ennobled by a humanistic ideal of life as a classical harmony. André Demedts, on the contrary, affiliates with the Norwegian and Russian masters of narration. He brings into full light the tragic conception of human life, for which redemption remains a merciful but dark mystery, which cannot do away with the fundamental loneliness of man and which will elucidate the senselessness of this existence only in a life beyond this life. His work exhibits spiritual depth and originality. Other novelists try the escape from reality into a roman-

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tically colored past. Thus Gaston Duribreux celebrates the primitive and heroic life of the fishermen of the North Sea coast, and Emiel Van Hemeldonck pictures, romantically, too, the simple life of the country people in the frame of a patriarchal life on the land. The gifted Paul Lebeau, on the contrary, concentrates on the moral and psychological problems of modern civilization and he analyzes, painfully but honestly, their influence upon the young Catholic intellectual.

Whoever considers in its full extent Catholic literature between the two wars cannot avoid the impression of a want of direction. After Flanders had been isolated for centuries from the revolutionary movements in philosophical thought and social theory which crossed over Europe, modern (and mostly laicized) European culture has all of a sudden challenged our literature. It is unpleasant but necessary to state that Catholic literature, taken as a whole, did not prove able in this confrontation with modern and international problems, both spiritual and social, to come to a solution which satisfies the true needs of the spirit as well as the righteous claims of a Christian sense of faith. Partly it has paid its due to the more or less laicized tendencies in modern European literature (aestheticism, vitalism, sceptical fatalism, etc.), and on the other hand it tries to escape reality by the illusion of an historical past or a romantic idealization of nature. As long as Catholic literature in Flanders does not find an harmonious synthesis between its century-old Christian and popular tradition and cosmopolitanism with its modern problems, it will remain in a condition of incertitude and crisis. The progress of liberal literature in Flanders is greatly due to that condition of crisis (that of "being unprepared") in which Catholic culture finds itself. During the last years, this was also made clear by the apostasy of prominent Catholic authors like G. Walschap and Marmix Gijsen.

Since the beginning of the last war little change has occurred in this situation of Catholic literature. The most important authors we possess, Stijn Streuvels and Cyriel Verschaeve, are now past seventy and are no longer productive. Good prose writers like Felix Timmermans, August Van Cauwelaert, J. Simons and E. Van der Hallen died during the past four years. In prose, the Catholic literature of these last ten years can not record one important acquisition, except for the gifted Kamiel Van Baelen, who unfortunately died very young in the concentration camp of Dachau. So the situation of Catholic prose in Flanders at this moment is rather unsatisfactory, especially with the younger generation. But we may rejoice in a progress of Catholic poetry which, seen in the perspective of the younger literature, is most important with poets of merit like Anton Van Wilderode, Hubert Van Herreweghen, and Jos De Haes.

There is still more happy progress in literary criticism and in the essay. With gifted writers like U. Van de Voorde, R. F. Lissens, and Clem. Bittremieux Catholic literary criticism ranks first. Through high respect for the aesthetic

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norm, through scientific training and widely European orientation, Catholic criticism will undoubtedly come to influence literary life in Flanders more and more deeply in the coming years. The influence which the Catholic University of Louvain has been having on the formation of young talents, both in criticism and scientific study of texts, must be mentioned here.

At this moment Catholic literature in Flanders possesses one important periodical, *Dietsche Warande en Belfort*, which (next to the liberal *De Vlaamsche Gids* and the freethinking and even anti-Catholic *Nieu Vlaamsch Tijdschrift*) plays an important role. In a Christian-humanistic spirit this magazine wants to serve the expansion of the Christian idea of civilization, in a progressive and constructive way, among Catholics as well as outside the Catholic milieu. It wants to put the Flemish readers into constant contact with the great problems of our time and to inform them about all that lives and grows in European and American letters. Flemish Catholics also possess a periodical, predominantly bibliographical, *Boekengids* (*Book-Guide*), which is devoted to the moral evaluation of current books.

III. BELGIUM: THE FRENCH CONTRIBUTION

BY MARCEL LOBET

BELGIUM has always had a great number of Catholic writers of the French School, especially since the literary renaissance of the *Jeune Belgique* at the end of the last century. Controversialists such as Baron Firmin van den Bosch, who died recently, and Count Henry Carton de Wiart, whose age did not lessen the vigor of his thought, as well as others, have given to the Catholic Revival an impulse from which a whole generation has benefitted.

This renaissance, moreover, coincided with the Catholic re-awakening which marked the advent of Symbolism in France. In Belgium at that time French writers such as Verlaine, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Bloy, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, and J. K. Huysmans had a profound influence, the effects of which are still felt. (The influence of Bloy is evident in such critics as Hubert Colleye, Léopold Levaux, and Georges Rouzet.)

A new impetus was given to Catholic letters in Belgium by the review *Durendal* and by the *Revue Générale*, which became in 1945 the *Revue Générale Belge*. This monthly publication—the most important in Belgium—brings together the intellectual elite of the country. In addition, Catholic writers have bound themselves together in an association under the name of *Scriptores Catholici*, which represents an important constellation in the firmament of Catholic letters in Belgium.

It is not possible to go into much detail or to mention many names in this brief survey. I should simply like to indicate some tendencies, a few general

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ideas, in such a way as to bring to the attention of the foreign reader the contribution of Belgian Catholic writers to the literature in the French language.

First of all, a word about the novel, which today is the most widely-known literary genre in all civilized countries. It has been claimed that the Belgian cannot be a novelist because he is first and foremost a painter. The fact is that in Belgian literature one does not find the *romans-fleuves* of the Anglo-Saxon type, nor long passages in which life is minutely described. The Belgian novel is relatively short and is made up of vividly colored pictures. It is more descriptive than psychological, and it is almost always lyrical, even when it is realistic.

The Catholic novel is no exception to these general tendencies. The portrayal of customs is surrounded with an aura of poetry. Even when it pretends to be no more than a rustic *petite suite*, a long *fabliau*, (in no way claiming to be a pastoral symphony), it still brings to mind the art of painting: it is an art in which alternate landscapes and country fairs—mysticism and sensuality. In this respect there is no work more representative than that of Georges Virrès. He is almost a naturalist in his deliberate portrayal of scenes from the crude peasant life.

Moreover, in this country the novel is dominated by geography: not only when it is based on folklore (as in the works of Edouard Ned, Jules Sottiaux, and Arthur Masson), but even when it has noble psychological ambitions. In other words, most of our Catholic novelists are provincial, even when they wish to study national psychology under its double aspect, as Henri Davignon has done in his novel *Un Belge*. In this story a man from Ardennes marries a woman from Flanders. However, Davignon, who is one of our best Catholic novelists, has dissociated Walloon subjects from Flemish subjects and has presented them as in diptychs: for example, he has a novel treating of mysticism amongst the Walloons and an account of the celebrated penitents of Furnes.

Henri Davignon is not the only one to place himself in what might be called *régionalisme supérieur*. Another Catholic writer of merit, Pierre Nothomb, forces us to reconsider our native land and its unique position. A certain historical concept of Lotharingia and of the Holy Roman Empire seems to have continued to exert its influence over this writer. He believes that it is the rôle of the countries situated between the Meuse and the Rhine to maintain the balance. In this he is like Barrès praising the *marches de l'Est*. Another phase of the work of Pierre Nothomb should be considered: his works centering about the spiritual and carnal adventure of man in Christendom, novels of his which paint the drama of man made heir to suffering and to earthly cravings by original sin. "*La Vie d'Adam*, *Rédemption de Mars*, and *L'Egrégore* are to be placed among the most courageous efforts of the Catholic novel of the French School.

The historic novel, to which Pierre Nothomb has devoted himself, is a patriotic genre of which the warmest defender is Count Henry de Wiart, the

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author of *Cité ardente*, *Vertus bourgeoises*, *Cariatides*, and *Bourrasque* 48. All of these works, in which the setting is vividly portrayed, are characterized by high ideals of civic duty, of patriotism, and of fidelity to the virtues of the past.

This cursory outline would be incomplete if we failed to give some attention to the Catholic poetry of Belgium.

Without going back to the precursors of the Christian Revival mentioned above, one cannot omit Adolphe Hardy, whose *Route enchantée* has been considered a masterpiece for nearly a half-century. This poet has succeeded in expressing in Parnassian form all shades of intense feeling. One could say the same of Franz Ansel, whose *Muses latines* sing so aptly and with such fervor.

Thomas Braun has been called the Francis Jammes of Belgium. In the work of this poet there is, indeed, a love of simplicity and a Georgic serenity close to that of Jammes. Similar in style is that of the early works of Pierre Nothomb. Since then his poetry has evolved into a more subtle expression. Amongst the pastoral writers should be mentioned Victor Kinon.

In my opinion the works of Camille Melloy rank very high in the Catholic poetry of Belgium. He was in a certain way a Gezelle of the French School, a Belgian Le Cardonnel, and at times even a Catholic Verhaeren. Of his native land, of his faith, of friendship, and of mankind he has sung in true poetry. This is particularly remarkable because this poet of Flemish origin knew nothing of the French language until he was twelve years old.

I should not like to close without paying homage to the *Cabiers des poètes catholiques*, which, thanks to their moving spirit, Pierre-Louis Flouquet, are outstanding in the field of Christian letters in its most generous expression. In an age which tends more and more to ignore the poetry of religious inspiration these *Cabiers* in collaboration with the *Journal des poètes* have helped to make Brussels a real *capitale de la poésie*. Such is the expression of an eminent French critic. It indicates, at least, that there is such devotion to poetry in Belgium that our country might be in this field, as in many others, the meeting place for the Catholic poets of the whole world. The single fact that such a man as Paul Claudel considers our province his true land of election is significant. Who knows if, with the aid of our American friends, we could not constitute an *internationale de la poésie catholique*?

Paris Letter on Claudel

The theatrical event of the season was the "générale" of *Partage de Midi*, on December 16, at the Théâtre Marigny. Claudel is very old today—he was born in 1868—and the play was written in 1905, more than forty years ago. Because of the central theme of the play, announced in its title, one felt the intensity of the full noon sun still over the career and the destiny of Claudel. The evening at the Marigny was an homage to him as well as to his work.

I was seated near him in the third row and was able to watch the expression on his face as the play was performed. Many of his colleagues the academicians were near by: Duhamel, Romain, Mauriac, and Mondor. Elizabeth, the Queen Mother of the Belgians, was in a box on his right. She had come to Paris to return Claudel's recent visit to Brussels where he had given a lecture on Romain Rolland.

On the occasion of this first official production of *Partage de Midi* and first public printing of the text, Claudel has made various statements about the play: its history and its meaning. He has been particularly concerned with Mesa, the hero, who is played by Jean-Louis Barrault. The poet calls him a Pharisee, and one of the meanest, "a bourgeois Pharisee," avaricious and egotistical. Mesa had felt himself called by God for a religious vocation and then had felt God's refusal. He left for China and on the boat (the first act) met a woman, Ysé (remarkably played by Edwige Feuillère). She, according to Claudel, is the instrument which will separate Mesa from himself and which will make him prefer, even in perdition, someone else to himself. At the end of the play, when Mesa and Ysé are about to die, he says that there was no way for him to give her his soul. *Il n'y avait pas moyen que je te donne mon âme.*

Claudel has stressed the importance of this play in his career. It belongs to that kind of writing whose origin lies in the existence itself of the poet. The play was in fact so intimately related to Claudel's personal life that for a long time scruples, which now he considers somewhat exaggerated, prevented him from publishing the text. Today Claudel sees his play bearing some light on that paradoxical passion of two beings whose death explains nothing, such as Tristan and Isolde. The drama springs from the need to deliver the reality of a being from the disguises and the vulgarity that surround it. Ysé performs this role in *Partage de Midi*, and Mesa acknowledges it: *Il n'y a que cette femme qui sache mon vrai nom.*

The subject matter of the play is almost trivial, but Claudel has raised it to the magnitude of a battle between the Law and Grace in its most diverse and unexpected forms. Ysé, in the three men grouped around her, pursues a stability, almost a security, which the world is unable to provide and which she will find only in death. She incarnates the principal idea of the play: "the spirit desiring against the flesh" (*l'esprit désire contre la chair*). The sobriety of the play, supported by only four characters, is an accomplishment of poetry and dramatic structure. One thinks instinctively of a musical composition, a quartet of four voices developing in rigorous progression.

At the beginning of the New Year, 1949, Paul Claudel is represented in Paris not only by his forty year old play of *Partage de Midi*, but also by a new publication on the Song of Songs: *Paul Claudel interroge le Cantique*

des Cantiques (Luf). The book at first would seem to be a commentary on Scripture. The eight chapters correspond to the eight chapters of the Bible text. At the beginning of each one, the Latin text is presented with a vigorously concise translation. The method of the commentary is precisely what the title of the book indicates: Claudel questions the text and constantly refers to himself. He reads the text with all his memories. "That reminds me of," he is always saying. We see him as a young consul in Fou-Tchéou; we meet his friend, Abbé Fontaine; we see him as lycéen receiving Renan's accolade. We read about the cathedrals of France and the trees of Brazil. Claudel makes no pretence at dialectics. The book is a kind of personal journal, kept between 1943 and 1947, by an old man who still has a great deal to say.

—Wallace Fowlie

A Message from Paul Claudel

Il est naturel que les hommes et les femmes qui ont entendu le même appel et qui partagent le même labeur éprouvent de temps en temps le besoin de se retrouver, de se regarder et de s'interroger les uns les autres, de confronter entre eux à la lumière des principes les résultats avec les espérances. Si cette nécessité périodique s'impose aux techniciens d'arts particuliers, combien plus à nous chrétiens, ces professionnels que nous sommes, à ces spécialistes en général, dont la vocation est de dégager de tout ce qui passe pour continuer, de tout ce qui ne s'en va que pour aller ailleurs, le *sens*, l'idée. A ce devoir exalté nous savons que les lumières naturelles, si fortifiées qu'elles puissent être par l'expérience et par l'étude, ne suffisent pas. Mais au bout de ce roseau que nous sommes il y a les trois bougies du Samedi Saint que le diacre allume dans la sacristie par le moyen d'une étincelle tirée de la pierre, et qui suffisent à éclairer le monde, *Lumen Christi*.

Cette lumière, nous savons qu'elle ne va pas cesser pendant quarante jours de briller d'un éclat accru à la pointe du cierge pascal; elle dont la sublime liturgie de ce temps auguste nous dit que "bien que divisée en parties, elle n'est aucunement diminuée en se communiquant.

C'est elle, c'est cette lumière inextinguible, que la destruction du temple de Jérusalem, si nous en croyons le rédacteur du Livre des Machabées, loin de l'offusquer, n'a servi qu'à manifester davantage, que vous êtes chargée de répandre et d'enseigner. Grâce à vous, elle ne cesse de prévaloir cette vérité imperturbable, qui nous précède à toutes les pages de l'Histoire Sainte où nous l'avons accompagnée à travers le désert, à travers ces flots confus que la foi traverse d'un pied allègre et où les tenants de la matière pour s'engloutir n'ont qu'à se fier à leur propre poids. Sur l'autre rivage, c'est tout un peuple qui l'attend, ce peuple innombrable de la jeunesse qui s'en est remise à vous. Et c'est de tout coeur que je m'unis à vous au seuil de ces grandes journées dédiées à la diffusion et à l'exaltation de la Parole de Dieu.—Paul Claudel

Spring Symposium 1949

"CATHOLIC literature is not to be thought of as narrow, cosy, moralistic, or sectarian," emphasized Prof. Frank O'Malley of the University of Notre Dame in one of the four major talks delivered during the first day of the spring symposium of the Catholic Renaissance Society. The symposium, held at Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, New York City, April 19 and 20, was attended by over 500 scholars, teachers and students of literature, art and philosophy.

Also discussing the theme "Catholic Values in a Disintegrating World" were the Very Rev. Canon Paul Sobry, University of Louvain, and Dr. Helmut A. Hatzfeld, both now on the faculty of the Catholic University of America, and the Rev. Terence L. Connolly, S.J., of Boston College.

Speaking on the renaissance of the novel from Bloy to Graham Greene, Professor O'Malley pointed out that, "Beneath our civilization of surfaces and superficial progress alien to the spirit, a spiritual underworld has developed and strengthened itself—and the great Catholic writers of the modern world are alive and powerful within it.

The way of men is profoundly liturgical, not just intellectual or aesthetical, he said. "Their lives and their meaning rest at the heart of the world of the Church, the world of worship; the worlds of intellect and art move within this world of worship."

Discussing Bloy, Bernanos, Mauriac, Greene and Undset, Professor O'Malley stressed that the "chief significance of the renaissance of the Catholic novel is the renewal of the sense of spiritual suffering and the meaning and mystery of suffering and sin. With this emphasis they have also renewed the spirit of innocence, of spiritual innocence which is saintliness."

Canon Sobry, first speaker on the program, distinguished the role of the individual and the Church in the advancement of culture which he said, is the result of individual natural talent and a common natural endeavor. "Those who expect cultural initiatives from the Church do not understand her timeless character and work. The Church as such stands indifferent towards any cultural effort, provided it respects the human person and all his needs, fosters, or at the very least, does not impede man in his way to the eternal Home which is God in Heaven."

Catholic values, he pointed out in addition, affect literature in a way which is not always clearly understood. They have nothing whatever to do with the literary art as such, but much to do with literature as the record of man's human experience.

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"The Catholic doctrine reveals in the clearest light," Canon Sobry explained, "man's highest signification, his being destined for eternity. As soon as the consciousness of man's awful greatness is raised to the full in the soul of the literary artist, a flood of light will be thrown, even unconsciously, on man's life. Catholic values can be the leaven that makes a whole book on sin and human frailty look great and noble and true in the perspective of eternity, even if not a word is in it that expresses that view."

Dr. Hatzfeld, speaking on the renaissance of literary criticism, ascribed the "leading role in the twentieth century" to such Catholic critical theorists as Bremond, Maritain and Turnell and to the applied criticism of such men as Guardini. He illustrated the differing methods of the critics by showing the ways in which they judged such authors as Goethe, Dostoevski, Chateaubriand, Baudelaire and Rilke.

Quoting the young English critic, F. Martin Turnell, Dr. Hatzfeld stated that "the first thing a Catholic must realize is that in the literary order dogma must never be applied dogmatically. The artistic success of a work is independent of the beliefs on which it reposes." Therefore, asserted Dr. Hatzfeld, the Catholic critic who deduces the impoverishment of modern poetry from the lack of faith and traditional Catholic values will be sterile and negative, unable to restore lost literary values or to deepen his own criticism.

Turnell, said Dr. Hatzfeld, makes us aware of the shortcomings of T. S. Eliot, Nobel prize winner in literature. "Eliot," he said "is much more a critic of civilization than a literary critic."

Bremond, Maritain, Turnell and Guardini are the superior critics, Dr. Hatzfeld concluded. By upholding the primacy of aesthetics, they have avoided becoming utilitarian propagandists. "They have used the Catholic principles as living forces in themselves."

Father Connolly, curator of the collection of Francis Thompson manuscripts at Boston College, urged that other schools also attempt to acquire special collections. "Critical evaluation," he noted during his luncheon talk, "must not be a parrot-like repetition of the evaluation of those who have no sympathy with what they condescendingly call 'the Catholic viewpoint.' It must be the result of original research, which requires collections of the works and manuscripts, published and unpublished, of these Catholic writers."

"In this country we have yet to produce a major Catholic writer," asserted Dr. John Pick of Marquette University, adding, however, that the "horizon is now full of hope and promise." He and Professor O'Malley of the University of Notre Dame gave the concluding talks in the two-day symposium of the Catholic Renaissance Society.

Scheduled to talk on "The Renaissance in America Today," Dr. Pick informed the audience of 500 that the title is a misnomer. "It is really impossible to speak

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of a revival of Catholic letters in America. There had flourished here no earlier Catholic culture; there was nothing to be reborn."

Dr. Pick sketched the history of Catholic letters in America which he termed "less the history of a literary movement than the individual stories of a number of isolated figures." Only Orestes Brownson and, to a lesser extent, Agnes Repplier emerge as writers of real stature.

With the last two decades, however, the picture begins to brighten, according to Dr. Pick. Prose writers like J. F. Powers, Harry Sylvester and Richard Sullivan are "genuinely capable," and Robert Lowell as well as the Trappist poet and author of *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Thomas Merton, "may give to us here in America a poetry that may rank with that of the English and French revivals."

To enable young Catholic writers to realize their potentialities, Dr. Pick told the audience: "We must give well-taught courses in literature, we must exert sympathetic guidance in creative writing courses, we must find ways of giving scholarships and grants to writers, we must make room for quality stories in our magazines, we must prepare a reading public and, above all, we must have competent critical reviewers."

Professor O'Malley told the audience that, although many people say there is no essential relationship between religion and poetry, "still belief does make a vast difference in literature."

Speaking on the renaissance of Catholic poetry, Professor O'Malley pointed out that the writer who sees the world as unredeemed bewilderment cannot look upon time, history, nature or man with a profoundly dynamic response.

"The Catholic poet, however, like Claudel or Hopkins, knows that Christ entered into the world and redeemed history and mankind. This Incarnational awareness can enliven the poet's vision and illumine his words."

This will not, he pointed out, make him a more graceful poet in the literary sense, but it will make him, in a supernatural sense, a more "grace-full" poet, "a wiser poet, one with a deeper insight than that of his 'unbelieving' fellow-craftsmen. The Christian poet has the astonishing consciousness of the Word, and it shines through his words."—Warren G. Boivé.

Book Reviews

Existentialism, a Theory of Man. By Ralph Harper. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Pp. xii, 163. \$3.00.

This essay deserves a sympathetic and critical reception by those who are interested in the problem of the interrelation between philosophy and literature. The plays, novels and essays of the French existentialists are now enjoying wide popularity in English translation, but a sampling of them is likely to leave the Christian reader shocked and unwilling to explore more deeply into the meaning of existentialism. A similar reaction is felt by minds trained in academic philosophy, Scholastic and otherwise. What serious values can be extracted from a movement which exploits sex, atheism and the senselessness of life for its own sensational purposes? "None!" is the blunt answer of several reports on existentialism (by De Ruggiero, Bobbio and Grene) which are now circulating in America. But Ralph Harper refuses to accept this flat rejection and, what is more, maintains that existentialism finds room for a religious interpretation of life. His approach is thus distinguished by its patient analysis and its concern for the religious implications of this outlook.

It is no accident that some leading existentialists—Sartre, Camus, Marcel—are as active in the literary field as in the philosophical. Their basic conviction is that existence cannot be seized upon directly and theoretically: it must be hinted at and evoked through the concrete forms of art. In this way, they hope to avoid the paradox of discoursing abstractly and universally about that which is pre-eminently concrete and singular. Harper points out the successful expression of existential themes in the writings of Dostoevsky, Kafka, Hopkins, Henry James and Djuna Barnes. But he also warns that

literature can never be the exclusive medium for the development and communication of these insights. "The literary-minded reader has become gradually aware of the need for some 'ontological' criticism," (p. 19) and it is with the latter that Harper is most concerned. After tracing the historical background of the problem and the factors in everyday experience which suggest the existentialist view, he then examines in successive chapters the doctrines of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Rousselot, Guthrie and D'Arcy. (Jaspers and Marcel are touched upon only tangentially.) The unexpected association of the three latter with the three former names is a clue that this is no merely conventional survey of existentialist books but proceeds from a meditative, personal weighing of the issues.

Sartre has admitted that there are two types of existentialism—the atheistic and the religious; most accounts of the theory are based upon this division. But the question is posed by Harper, and before him by Father Troisfontaines, whether the existential experience itself is not anterior to these divergent doctrinal interpretations and in some way independent of taking a definite stand about God's existence. The suggestion is made here that the existential point of departure is an intuition of the unique self as both dying and living, as definitely contingent and yet open to being in an absolute sense. In terms of characteristic human moods, this primitive tension in the self engenders now dread before our nothingness and now a hopeful nostalgia for participation in existence. Systematically, the primal intuition gives rise to existentialisms having a tragic-nihilistic orientation and those which are more dynamic and constructive. This explains how some atheists and theists can make common

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cause up to a point in stressing the uniqueness of the human person, the given character and importance of existence, the "dreadful freedom" of the individual, the temporal and historical character of our lives, and other features of the human situation.

The fact is, however, that many existentialists refuse to admit that existence contains any factors which can assure an authentic overcoming of nihilism in a religious way. Sartre does not place the atheistic and religious views on an equal footing and does not derive them from a common root. For him, they represent counter-readings of the original data and—he is careful to add—there is no existentially admissible evidence for the theistic contentions. The latter take their origin not in the original condition of men but in subsequent "bad faith" and especially in *l'esprit de sérieux*. How, then, can the possibility of the religious outlook be grounded in an existential, yet philosophical, manner? Harper has not made it clear enough that there is no equivalence or necessary link between dread and a sense of contingency on the one hand and a tragic nihilism on the other. The possibility of a religious attitude is present wherever freedom is at work and hence is present even in this first moment of "existential intuition." The burden of Kierkegaard's analysis, for instance, is that spontaneous dread can be accepted in either a despairing or hopeful spirit. Nihilism and religious dynamism are distinguished from each other and locked in a struggle at the very beginning of one's awareness of the actual self.

Harper's description of the beginning or starting point of the existential inquiry is also based upon an undue concession to the Heidegger-Sartre tradition. That tradition is heavily weighted on the side of Descartes and the phenomenological method and is by no means the common heritage of all existentialists. Heidegger took a more revolutionary step than

is suspected in this book when he proposed to submit the questions of metaphysics to phenomenological investigation in the strict sense. For he was thereby proposing to uncover the ontological structure of reality *within* the brackets which had been placed around the actual world of existent men and things. Kierkegaard never dreamed of doing this, and Husserl dreamed of it only after he had shifted completely from a methodic to an idealistic conception of philosophy. Similarly, Sartre makes a conscious break with Kierkegaard when he reinstates the Cartesian awareness of self as the primary datum of existence. Because he has followed this particular pathway, Harper is forced to conclude that "the object of consciousness viewed as something received is not being but the what-ness of being . . . The fact or act of existence is inferred; it is not apprehended." (pp. 123-24; cf. p. 14). The theoretical consequence is that no natural, philosophical justification of either the direct affirmation of existence in judgment or the affirmation of God's existence is advanced. The historical consequence is that only the Augustinian line of thinkers is recognized as representative of Christian existentialism. Aquinas and the Scholastics are dealt with severely, inaccurately on some particular questions and always as "essentialists."

In Rousselot's studies on love and knowledge, Guthrie's dissertation on inquietude and D'Arcy's recent book on eros and agape, Harper found a rich mine of thought. With their aid, he has outlined an existentialism which extends the horizons of man far beyond the desolate wasteland, strained heroics and exasperated egoism usually associated with this philosophy. The new perspective, supported by illustrations from the literature of our time, should prevent any hasty identification of existentialism with what goes by that name today in the Paris mart. At the same time, there remains the

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question of whether and how existentialism can be developed *philosophically* into something more than "theory of man." Kierkegaard thought that it was more than this, and Aquinas thought that his doctrine on being and judgment is relevant to the philosophical study of existence. In these two directions, further research and reflection are certainly demanded. Especially in regard to Thomism, the criticism of Rousselot-Guthrie-D'Arcy passed by other Thomists and the positive investigations into Thomistic existentialism need to be considered. But Harper has already done a good service in presenting this sharp challenge to the adequacy of the Sartrean brand of humanism. It remains for novelists and playwrights to illuminate in their persuasive and indispensable way other depths of the human heart to which the nihilists have methodically denied themselves access.

—JAMES COLLINS

St. Louis University

Agnes Repplier: Lady of Letters. By George Stewart Stokes. University of Pennsylvania Press. \$3.00.

Insofar as it recalls to a present generation of critics something of the mature poise and wide learning that characterized critics of literature in the late days of Victoria, this short biographical study has value. It is essentially an extended review of Miss Repplier's whole body of work, and since it is done with sympathy and intelligence we can be grateful for it. It tells the story of a talented woman who had wit enough to recognize the limits of her talent and sufficient dignity to be content with a near perfection within those somewhat narrow limits.

As a biography, this book is far from satisfactory. Presumably the facts are as they are stated, but they do not add up to very much. There is a suggestion of undue reticence on almost every page, and very seldom does the reader feel that he is getting anything but chit-chat. In all

probability this is not the fault of the biographer, but it does not help his book. It results in an impression of provincialism, of affectation, of a wholly kittenish sensibility, that belies the Voltairian aura around the essays themselves. The reader is left with a rueful sense of depths unplumbed and a temperament still elusive, or worse still with the feeling that the subject was unworthy of study. An elaborate mock-gentility of style contributes to this total impression.

—JOSEPH G. E. HOPKINS

Paul Claudel and "The Tidings Brought to Mary." By Kathleen O'Flaherty. Cork University Press; The Newman Press. Preface by Paul Claudel. \$2.25.

This excellent introduction to Claudel's work (unnecessarily justified as "for Irish readers," p. 4) comes after many other very good ones such as the monographs by Tonquédec, Madaule, Bindel, Gillet, Molitor and Carrouges, which were used and those by Curtius, Dieckmann, Grosche, Casnati, Perche and Mlle. Chonez, which were not employed in Miss O'Flaherty's study. What is new in her presentation is the concentration on Claudel's greatest drama from which light has been thrown also on his other works. They are critically skimmed as foils, parallels and suggestions. It was a particularly good idea to give the contents of Claudel's most important plays in an appendix.

The problems dealt with are all vital, Claudel's conversion, the characters of *L'Annonce*, its lyricism, symbolism, metaphors and Claudel's *ars poetica*. The little book is serious and profound to the point that when difficulties of interpretation come up, it is hard to say whether the flaw is in the poet or in the critic. Thus the apparent inconsistencies and slightly melodramatic implications in the characters are brought into a new light. It is with substantiated remarks that Miss O'Flaherty finds in Violaine at the outset a certain slight guilt: it is she who tempts by her unconscious

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coquettishness Pierre de Craon (does, however, the text really admit of this: "O Violaine! O woman through whom comes temptation"?).

The kiss she gives him is far from being "le baiser du lépreux." It comes from unconsidered youthful exuberance combined with great purity and human compassion. On the other hand, Violaine believes in boundless love and therefore naively expects from the earthbound Jacques Hury faithfulness also to a leper. In her accepted suffering she becomes then the visible co-redemptive instrument of grace for the whole family. Although this point is very convincingly worked out in the details, one misses here the strictly developed analogy to Mary as expressed in the title of the play (p. 91 vs. 77). A great difficulty is to understand how the perfect saint who has the charisma of resuscitating a child, betrays when dying the secret of Mara's successful attempt at causing her death, without any "heroic reticence" (p. 64). A second problem is how she is capable of continuing to love Jacques, nay, is bound to this love after all her detachment and Jacques' evident unworthiness of her. Either, says Miss O'Flaherty, the "denunciation" occurs inadvertently in an audible prayer (far-fetched, but possible!) or Violaine, according to J. Madaule, fears that Jacques would, after her death, learn the truth anyway, and then nobody would be there to urge on him forgiveness and abstinence from revenge on Mara. As to the inextinguishable human love in Violaine, Miss O'Flaherty constructs with less skill a Beatrice-situation; Violaine and Jacques Hury will continue their sublimated love "spiritually united" even in Heaven (p. 67). This romantic slap in the face of the tremendous "Non nubent" would throw a curious light on the sacrament of marriage in which the slowly converted Mara is Jacques' partner after all. No! This would be indeed "too suave . . . too facile" (p. 75). Either Violaine is not "through" with her saintliness despite her terrible purifications

(she preserves illusions, fears and regrets" p. 72), or she condescends with her loving "ironical" (p. 63) talk to the level of Jacques Hury, the more so, as she herself has found the One Beloved who makes appear all other loves as promises which cannot be kept (p. 76). In this situation she has compassion for the spiritual "cripple, leaning on the frail shoulder of a young girl who patiently guides him up the only way which he can tread . . . without mystical fervour" (p. 71).

Miss O'Flaherty is a wonderful analyzer of the *flower* and the *bird* and the *perfume* as symbols of beauty, delicacy and uplifting sanctity which are used together with a profusion of other images in recurrent synonyms and allusions. Furthermore, she points out how delicately Claudel uses colors and how his rhythm expresses character and psychology. Typical of the younger generation is Miss O'Flaherty's justification of Mara's crimes as "etiam peccata": she "needed" according to her character great sins to come to humiliation and grace.

— HELMUT HATZFELD

Catholic University

Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Man and the Poet. By K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. Indian Branch: Oxford University Press. Rs. 12-8.

If the lists of publishers are a significant revelation of the vitality of interest in a subject, then one may be very sure that there is an ever-growing importance attached to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins. The prediction of F. R. Leavis, the editor of *Scrutiny*, back in 1932 seems to be coming true: "Hopkins is likely to prove, for our time and the future, the one influential poet of the Victorian age."

Besides a newly edited and revised edition of his poems, there were published this past year three important volumes: *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition* by W. H. Gardner, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Critical Essay towards the Understanding*

of *His Poetry* by W. A. M. Peters, and *Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins* edited by Norman Weyand, S.J.

Still another indication of the widespread interest in Hopkins is the appearance of a further book, published by the Indian Branch of the Oxford University Press and written by a Hindu.

The object of Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar is multiple and almost all-inclusive: "to give an account of Hopkins, of the man no less than the poet; and to indicate roughly his achievement and influence in relation to the 'between the wars' period in English poetry." That he has not been able to fulfill all of this promise is not surprising to anyone who knows the magnitude of the problems involved, and indeed the author almost entirely neglects even to touch on the second part of his objective.

Within the limits of two hundred pages he does try to present both the biography of Hopkins and an analysis and survey of his poetry. The book as it stands is very comprehensive, even including chapters on his friendships, his political views (rarely treated and here interesting as the viewpoint of an Indian), his prosody and what is here called his "linguistic experiments." The volume is therefore almost necessarily open to the charge of superficiality. The author has little to contribute in the way of a new synthesis or fresh interpretation though his sympathy and enthusiasm for his subject are obvious.

Important parts of the book appeared ten years ago in the form of three articles contributed to the *New Review* of Calcutta. Publication in book form was long delayed by the war, and probably the author has resisted too firmly the temptation extensively to revise the original manuscript in order to take advantage of numerous special critical articles and studies which have appeared in the last decade.

Two or three crucial points which tend to perpetuate misconceptions should be mentioned. That the famous "terrible" sonnets of Hopkins issued from a profound

tension no sensitive reader will doubt. But to say that they were born of an anguished struggle between faith that trusted and doubt that questioned, however ultimately resolved, sets aside not only the overwhelming evidence of Hopkins' own letters but it sets aside the evidence of the poems themselves. A careful textual analysis of the sonnets themselves excludes such an interpretation.

Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar accounts for whatever failures he finds in Hopkins' poetry by holding that in these cases Hopkins was "a martyr to his own theories." Hopkins' own practice would seem to have been the other way around: he wrote and theorized afterwards and only then proceeded to find justification by finding parallels in the history of poetry and prosody.

Most of what this book does has been done before, and it is difficult to see in what way it adds to our knowledge or appreciation of Hopkins. The only person who could use it to real advantage is the reader who has never before been introduced to Hopkins—and he is just the person who is most helpless in detecting the few fundamental misconceptions that occur in the course of the book.

—JOHN PICK

Marquette University

Wreath of Song. By Robert C. Broderick. Bruce. \$3.00.

Mr. Broderick's tale is a somewhat fictionalized version of Everard Meynell's biography of Francis Thompson, which is familiar to all lovers of the poet. Two-thirds of the novel concerns the poet's early youth and outcast days of destitution in London; the rest deals summarily with his two decades of literary activity, touching lightly on his love for Mrs. Meynell and his brief association with Patmore.

In the preface to the novel, the author indicates that his intention was to draw "an impressionistic and interpretative" portrait of Thompson that might be helpful in understanding and appreciating the poet's

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work. The motive supporting the author's artistic intent is certainly laudable, and we sincerely wish we could say that he had succeeded in accomplishing his intention, for all lovers of Thompson would rejoice at a competent novel on their beloved poet. But in all honesty we are compelled to report that despite the author's evident sincerity and earnestness, Francis Thompson never comes to life in these pages, either as a credible human being or a credible literary figure.

The principal motif of the novel seems to be that the poet's outcast years were not "that nightmare time" to which he refers so feelingly in "Sister Songs," but rather a period during which he devoted himself to interior progress, without serious thought of any regular livelihood, meanwhile accepting his physical sufferings in a spirit of thorough resignation.

Although this theme does not seem to be wholly substantiated by Thompson's poetry, it might be made quite credible, provided the author illustrated the presumed interior development by appropriate detail. But this is precisely where Mr. Broderick fails. He is content to assure his reader from time to time that his hero is advancing toward a full perception of beauty and truth, but he provides us with no concrete evidence of the fact. The result is that the character of Thompson remains wooden and lifeless. His soul seems as moribund and listless as his body.

In addition, the author's style is prevailingly banal and pretentious. The book is sprinkled with general reflections after this fashion: "The somnolence of Ashton-under-Lyne was not easily disturbed . . . But in the great cities, prematurely born, monstrously born, monstrously conceived, bred of an heredity that had fouled the blood of ideals, the babes of transitional forces were ready to leave their swaddling clothes." And in the next paragraph Oscar Wilde is referred to as "a new neophyte of bawdy bawbles."

The dialogue is cut from the same timber. Thompson, huddling near a fire in a public refuge, addresses a lower-echelon companion thus:

"The evils of the city do not justify one man's taking from another just so that he can give himself the means of continuing in poverty, free of the responsible way of life . . . What you say is an idea, twisted to suit your purposes, that was lately put forth by some writers named Bentham and Cobden. They say simply that the first and chief aim of society is the gaining of the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people, that what is good is only that which can be put to use. But it is too simple a way of saying that this is the goal of human life—that we must use the things produced by the new industries in order to add to ourselves the things that will make us independent of the very tools that produce these things. It results in a confused generation taking up a way of life to attempt to escape the life itself. I cannot agree—there is certainly a higher equation."

The passages quoted do not represent an occasional lapse; they are typical of the novel's prevailing style. The characters are bloodless dummies; they speak, they act, they are described in a lifeless, hackneyed fashion. The result is a dull and mechanical chronicle that cannot fail to disappoint Thompson enthusiasts and will certainly not make the poet attractive to those who have no knowledge of him.

—FELIX DOHERTY

North Woburn, Mass.

Henri Davignon, Ecrivain belge. By Sister Marguerite Félicie Inial. Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press.

The Catholic Renaissance, which originated in France at the end of the 19th century and developed into a fulsome movement at the beginning of the 20th, had its

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counterpart in Belgium, even if on a smaller scale. There, as in France, the same adversaries were barring its progress, and naturalism and positivism had to loosen their grasp on literature and philosophy before this attempted return to Catholic sources could be firmly established. But the movement encountered in Belgium still further difficulties, for it was impeded by the historical schism between Flemish and Walloons. The former claimed to be the only true representatives of Catholic traditionalism and the Walloons were identified with the atheistic and anti-religious French literature. Henri Davignon resolved happily these problems, in his private life, by marrying into a Flemish family; in his literary activity, by restoring national sources, both Flemish and Walloon, as a literary inspiration.

It is therefore as a national writer that Davignon is presented to us in this volume. But Davignon's national inspiration is permeated by his Catholic principles, themselves founded on a careful Catholic education, and expressed in a lifelong adherence to the practice of his faith. Thus solidly grounded on the native soil, Davignon could without danger seek elsewhere recognized masters for his literary technique. He went quite naturally to the French writers who, with an authority already generally acknowledged, had imparted an initial and lasting impulsion to the Catholic revival. From Bourget, Davignon derived some principles of the *roman à thèse* and the rigorous demonstration in which the action is quite frequently subordinated. But the warmest admiration of the Belgian novelist seems to have been reserved for Bordeaux, who protected him, introduced him to French literary groups, and prefaced one of his books. From Bordeaux, Davignon evidently received the dominant theme of his works, the sacredness of the family, which is the foundation of all social life. Barrès and Bazin contributed also to the literary formation of Davignon, the first leading him to the tra-

ditionalism expressed by *la terre et les morts*, a form of idealistic regionalism; the second inculcating a wholesome realism in the description of the milieu and external circumstances.

Such is the Henri Davignon who emerges from the book of Sister Marguerite. He is not yet, and perhaps never will be, a star of the first magnitude (Sister Marguerite's book is apparently the first full size volume devoted to him), but an author of ability, a force for order and national unity, a force, above all, for Catholic doctrine and Catholic morality. Sister Marguerite has treated her subject with a mature talent, a sound critical approach and profound scholarly knowledge. She has considered her author with a remarkable degree of objectivity, and has known quite well how to resist the urge so common in those who compile material for a dissertation to lavish dithyrambic praises and to discover unrecognized geniuses. She realizes, and she says, that Davignon's talent has not yet been tested by posterity, and his reputation not yet established. She has detected too much flourish in his style, flaws in his demonstrations, and inconsistencies in his attitude. She has an excellent knowledge of the social, intellectual and literary background, and has correctly assessed the influence of the background on Davignon's literary achievements. She has appraised keenly, with an authority tempered with moderation, the duties of the Catholic novelist, and the delicate equilibrium to be maintained between the exigencies of art, the faithfulness to external truths and those of Catholic morality and regard for decency. The study abounds in original reflections. The reader is impressed also by the purity and ease of the style. It is a rare phenomenon to find a doctoral dissertation written in such a fluent and elegant French—or English, for that matter. The extended and solid general culture of the author appears at every page—which is not perhaps an unmixed blessing, for the author has sometimes gone astray of her field and has

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been impelled to stretch a point so as to justify an otherwise irrelevant quotation. This display of erudition would be in bad taste if it were not so evidently unconscious. But the few defects which mar this work are purely formal, such as, for instance, the lack of uniformity in titles and bibliographical references and disconcerting variations in the use of capitals in titles and in underlining Latin words. She has been particularly ill-inspired in what I presume to be an adaptation of St. Paul's "diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum, etiam peccata" when she uses a plural noun as an adjective in the form "vie, etiam peccata." The disposition of her abundant material leaves much to be desired, and titles such as "National writer," "Catholic novelist" are apt to include, and do include, many extraneous considerations which sometimes overshadow the supposed main theme of the chapter. I would not agree with her criticism of the use of the first person narrative in some of Davignon's novels. Many masterpieces of contemporary literature have followed this method so propitious to introspective analysis, and we need but mention *A la recherche du temps perdu*.

—FERNAND VIAL

Fordham University

St. Margaret of Cortona. By François Mauriac. Philosophical Library. \$3.00.

This extraordinary book bears upon it the marks of its origin. It is a meditation on the life of one of the most disconcerting of the saints, written during the bleak days of the German occupation before even the resistance had begun—an hour when nothing but his faith remained to lift up the heart of a patriotic Frenchman. "The whole earth was covered with darkness . . . all of those winters formed nothing more than a black and frozen block in our minds . . . it was necessary to write."

Nor did it much matter which saint was chosen by Mauriac or from what era "As is a mystic of our own day, Margaret was a contemporary of Christ." According to

tradition her lover went out one day followed by his greyhound. Two days later the dog returned alone. Whining and pulling at Margaret's dress he drew her into the forest. "Margaret pushed aside the freshly cut branches and discovered the corpse pierced by stabs already decomposed. And forthwith she saw the Other."

The rest of Margaret's life is the story of her penitence—so fierce as to frighten us, of her amazing ecstasies, of her labours. Almost the only historical source used by Mauriac is the account written by her confessor, Brother Bevegnati of the Friars Minor, by whom her revelations have been "carefully filtered." Yet enough is there to open avenues of fascinating psychological and theological speculation. Even after the good brother's work on them, sufficient basis can be found of Margaret's own to open the question raised by every one of the great mystics: when was God speaking, when was the devil deceiving them? Sometimes they would not listen for fear of the latter—and Mauriac sees Margaret refusing what were really the Lord's consolations when the thought of her sins overwhelmed her.

Yet too when she accepted such a reproach as "You think of nothing but yourself" at a moment when she had offered her goods, her loving service, her fierce penances, her anguish, to God and to her neighbors, it may have been "The old adversary who whispered in Margaret's ear . . . 'poor ephemeral creatures what importance you give yourselves' he whispers incessantly to those seeking perfection. 'What a price you attach to your slightest gestures, your slightest thoughts . . . you surrender yourself to horrible excesses in order to force God to pay attention to your extravagance' . . . Perhaps the eternal liar does not think he is lying . . . that is just how saints appear to this exile from love." But this too is why "the road to perfection skirts the abyss of despair."

Much of this was said by St. Theresa and by St. John of the Cross. And St. John

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went further, for he anticipated modern psychology in adding a third element often omitted by the earlier mystics. "God told me, God replied to me," he says mockingly of those who claimed revelations "and yet most often they were talking to themselves." Mauriac quotes these words and analyzes how truly even the reality of a divine locution comes to us through a human personality more or less diminished by sin. In complete contradiction to the unbeliever he is convinced that Our Lord did speak to His saints and much of this book is devoted to an attempt at sorting out the true, the partly true and the misleading elements in the visions and locutions reported by the creature as given to it by the infinite Creator.

Many of these distinctions apply also to extraordinary behaviour—and in Margaret's case her harsh treatment of the child of her sin is a puzzling example. The poor boy was forced to share in his mother's penance and her only concern about him appears to have been for his eternal salvation. The one thing necessary of course—but did God really wish her to neglect all the rest to give him no happy childhood memories, no chance of an ordinary man's life, no choice concerning his own vocation? She seems simply to have thrust him into the habit of the Friars Minor. Even if she were already a saint she might well, thinks her biographer, have been mistaken—but if the mistake was indeed the outcome of love, "Margaret knew what her accusers were unaware of, that in casting him in the sea, she was casting him at God. The child's destiny could not help being fulfilled within Christ's love for Margaret and Margaret's for Christ."

Equally interesting is Mauriac's discussion of the violent austerities of his saint. He draws a distinction between the happiness of her father St. Francis and the gloom of one who was, we must remember, "a girl who had been lost." But the thing goes far deeper. "It is we who make necessary the frightful excesses of the penitent saints."

They are in part bearing our cross. And profoundly he says: "The cross is not opposed to life as it is. The saints do not introduce the cross to their destiny; they find it there all set up. Instead of diverting themselves from it, in the Pascalian sense, by pleasures and games, or fleeing it through the thousand loop holes which men have discovered (from tobacco and alcohol to drugs and all the disguised forms of suicide) they question it, they snatch its secret of love and joy."

Mauriac does not deny, rather he asserts, that for the ordinary man the road too is intended by God to be more ordinary. He depicts the labourer drinking in the joys of home as his wife and children refresh him with wine and food and with their presence at the end of his day's toil. Yet even on man's normal road can be found "The daily dast of boredom and vexations . . . the thing the doctor suddenly tells us on some quite ordinary day—the street noises come in through the open window, a bird sings, and you look this suddenly unmasked death in the face." And for every Christian there exists as truly as for the saints an atmosphere of the infinite in which we may live our lives.

"The liturgy orchestrates life, the sacraments keep a fire going, sometimes a weak flame, sometimes a bright strong one . . . the least important Christian in a state of grace knows that he shelters the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and that they make their dwelling within him. He has only to shut his eyes for the Pentecostal wind blowing within him to lift up and carry off the poor daily cares as if they were straws. Every morning the cross bathes the day which starts with an atmosphere of grandeur, isolates it, defends it against the immense vulgarity of men and things . . . Perhaps those who lose their faith have never tasted the full sweetness of the Lord. One is never cured of God

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when one has known Him. Those who reject Him have not possessed Him."

—MAISIE WARD

Nineteen Stories. By Graham Greene. Viking. \$2.75.

Graham Greene saw fit to be apologetic in an Author's Note, prefacing *Nineteen Stories*, about his inexperience with the short story form. So gifted a technician in the novel form could not be other than conscious of his fumbling approach to the short story.

It is not, however, in the craftsmanship alone that the greater number of these *Nineteen Stories* are a disappointment to one who expects beautifully polished work from Mr. Greene. Save for such shining exceptions as "The Basement Room," "The Hint of an Explanation," "The End of the Party" and—to some extent—"The Innocent" and "A Chance for Mr. Lever," the materials for short stories seem inadequate also. Many of the stories are a mood or an episode rather than a story; such a fragment as might be written by a novelist and, years later, clamor for its place in a longer work then being performed. Three or four of the stories are flights into the most macabre of fantasy which, to this eye, did not come off because of inadequate background: "Proof Positive," "A Little Place off the Edgware Road," "The Second Death." And one of the stories, "A Day Saved," was utterly incomprehensible to me. I recognized it as a symbol but I do not know of what.

The publication of this volume of *Nineteen Stories* certainly is justified by its purpose, as noted both by author and publishers: "... by-products of a novelist's career," "another facet of Greene's literary craftsmanship."

The stories are not only "typically Greene" in their relentless preoccupation with man's frailty as human clay. They also reveal (as do Greene's novels and "entertainments") the definite pattern within which he works.

It is in a spirit of tribute, not of carping, that I call attention to formula in all that has been published by the man whom I have elsewhere designated "the finest novelist now writing in English." His formula has sprung full-grown from an extraordinary perception of evil, in its most delicately subtle manifestations as well as in its most blatant. Perhaps it is unnecessary to add that so acute a perception of evil is inevitably hand-in-hand with a penetrating vision of good. Mr. Greene himself loves to point out that one human capacity usually is accompanied by its opposite. A writer of such perception and capacity to share it may very well dedicate himself to do so as a lifelong task, motivated by love of God and compassion for all His creatures in His Name.

These *Nineteen Stories*, like the novels and "entertainments," each have a protagonist who is pursued by evil, either within himself or in the person or circumstance which, within himself, is its embodiment. The boy in "The Basement Room" has witnessed lust and murder—both perpetrated by the character whom he found most kindly and lovable; the one in "The End of the Party" has terror of the dark—the cloak for evil. Other characters in other stories fear death, loss of sanity, an impoverished old age, and so on. The universal fears of man are chosen, each in turn, to be the instrument or the pressure toward an individual's fall from grace or toward his salvation. The pursued one is invariable. The pursuer sometimes embodies Satan, sometimes "the Hound of Heaven."

Through "that long pursuit" which I have followed in Mr. Greene's work, I have been specially struck by the fact that his two most powerful novels thus far, *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter*, are reversals of an identical theme. The "whisky priest" of *The Power and the Glory* displays all the degradations of spirit known to desperately seeking mankind. Nevertheless, his fellow men recognize his

essential sanctity, through humility in suffering for the love of God.

Scobie of *The Heart of the Matter* on the other hand, is one to whom other men look as to a saint, while he knows himself propelled toward the ultimate damnation. But in both novels the judgment of man is cautioned never to forget the overwhelming compassion and infinite wisdom of the judgment of God.

It seems to me that all of Graham Greene's writings say, over and over and over again: the most evil one has his path of sanctity and the most saintly one cannot escape his path of evil. It is reiterated with brilliance, with a compassion that is also cruel in its relentless realism, with obsessive fear of damnation and without humor. It is a theme so essential to our times, so urgent to man's sanity and salvation, that I have no hesitation before superlatives in acclaiming Mr. Greene as the most significant—as well as the finest—novelist of our age. His *Nineteen Stories* tell me again that in the short story form Mr. Greene demonstrates, first of all, that he is a masterly novelist.

—ISABEL CURRIER

Marblehead, Mass.

Si j'étais vous. By Julian Green. Paris: Librairie Plon. (Eng. trans. by J. H. F. McEwen entitled *If I Were You*. Harper. \$3.00.)

Julian Green's latest novel, *Si j'étais vous*, written in French, has been recently translated into English under the title, *If I Were You*.^{*} The author, although American by heritage, is essentially French by education and taste, and as it were, by osmosis. In his autobiographical work, *My Old World*, Ernest Dimnet refers to the "curious osmose which carries the psychology of a nation into the soul of a man not

belonging to it, through the medium of language." This osmosis seems to have taken place in the case of Julian Green, born in Paris at the turn of the century. His mother and father, both American and Protestants, were from the Old South where their forbears had established sturdy Irish, Scotch, and English roots.

Julian Green began to speak French as a child, and received his early education in French institutions of learning. With the exception of *Memories Of Happy Days*, he has always written in French, the language he learned in his childhood and has spoken ever since, "I cannot write in that language without saying to myself that I am trying to put on a garment which is not made for me; . . . it is a uniform which is too tight for me. My everyday suit, in which I feel happy and free, is French."

After the First World War, Julian Green came to the United States at the invitation of his uncle, to spend three years at the University of Virginia, where he studied Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, and received an introduction to his favorite American writers, Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe. But he never felt completely at home in American surroundings and, homesick for Paris, decided to return to France without completing his work toward a degree.

Once again on familiar French soil, he was confronted with the necessity of choosing his life work. Painting and music claimed his interest for a time, but the urgency of writing became more and more pronounced, and, after a period of uncertainty, he finally accepted his vocation of a novelist.

In his introduction to *If I Were You*, Julian Green tells us that his book is an attempt to set in order things that have puzzled him since he was a child. One of the first questions which he asked himself was why he was his particular self and not someone else. He goes on to say that he does not attempt to answer the riddle of human identity, for he affirms, "I believe that if each one of us is encased in

^{*}This review has been based on the French text. The quotations from the novel are taken from the English translation which is generally good.

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his own personality the reason is that it is God's will that it should be, but there is no harm in speculating upon what would have been the case otherwise."

Julian Green gives full play to this speculation in the principal character of his novel, Fabian Espécel, a "well-educated, thoughtful and almost clever young man," who aspires to be a writer but is obliged to earn his living as a clerk. Fabian, suffering from boredom and the mediocrity of his existence, undisciplined and lethargic in his resistance to sin, seeks release from himself by nimbly changing personalities with several individuals possessing qualities of mind and body which he covets. In order to accomplish such a feat, he willingly accepts the services of a mere underling of Satan, by name of Brittomart. Hungry for souls, the devil, at the summons of Fabian, gives the young man a secret formula by which he can enter any personality at will. The Evil One recognizes an easy prey in Fabian, who, except for the period once a year when he makes his Easter duty and thus, as he says, "puts on a spiritual straight-jacket," has arranged his life so that religion is in one compartment and the rest of his life in another.

Fabian first seeks security by assuming the personality of his employer, Poujars, a cowardly, heavy, well-to-do bourgeois, who, like the businessman in Saint Exupéry's *Little Prince*, lives in fear of becoming destitute. Pursued by the thought that he will die as Poujars, whose health is anything but good, Fabian hastens to leave him. Next, by contrast, he chooses a man by the name of Esménard only after the accomplishment of murder. It is significant that for this change Brittomart must come to his aid, for the dulled intelligence of Esménard is unable to indicate a choice. His new personality is that of an anemic intellectual by the name of Emmanuel Fruges, a repressed introvert enslaved by the sin of pride, possessed with an inquisitiveness in regard to psychological problems, who "invites temptation but refuses acceptance."

In Fruges, Fabian plays a thwarted game of hide and seek with fear. Frantic, he seeks to enter the soul of a little child. In this instance, Julian Green gives definite testimony to the power of Grace. In the presence of innocence the formula does not work.

Was it then going too far to wish to become a child? A short time ago when he had been whispering the all-powerful words into little George's ear he had had the feeling that he was throwing so many stones against a brick wall; yes it had been just as if each word he had spoken had been a stone bouncing off a hard blank surface. So that was it! There were definite limits to the exercise of the power he had received, and innocence was one of them? By sin alone could access be gained to a soul. He thought back to his catechism definitions and suddenly he realized that a state of grace was something much more important than the life of the body, the circulation of the blood in a man's veins or the air that vivifies his lungs. In a flash of perception he caught a glimpse of what true faith might mean—the wholehearted acceptance of all those religious ideas which he had learned during the past fifteen years but which had never penetrated any deeper than the brain. In the sudden realization that all these were true he laid his hand, as it were, upon one of the essential principles of the spiritual life. He rose to his feet, abashed. He had been defeated, hands down, by a child.

Desperate, weighed down with his own personality and the accumulated weaknesses inherited from the personalities of his hosts, Fabian hopes to find peace in a "suitable body and serviceable brain, not vitiated by a feeble character." He hastily leaves Fruges for a handsome young man, Camille, who apparently has everything in the way of material happiness but is in reality an unhappy person sadly lacking in will power. He is dominated by an avaricious old uncle who in his own mind has taken the place of that "God whom he imagined he worshipped and now worships none but himself." He is also domi-

nated by his wife, the sort of person who "from time to time requires a will to break." With Camille, Fabian completes the cycle, and finds himself bored by that very boredom which had been the bane of his existence before he had begun his strange itinerary. In frenzied fear, he sees his identity gradually merging with that of Camille, whose shell of self-assurance really springs from the flattery of a young girl's love. It is in the eyes of this young girl, Elise, "eyes having in them all the tragedy of a longing which can never be satisfied," that the shadow which remains of Fabian's personality recognizes itself. Without knowing why he pronounces the words, "Oh, Fabian," and at that instant he begins his weary agonizing return to his own personality. Half blind, he retraces his steps to the library where he had found Fruges' personality. From there he gropes through the labyrinthian passages of his memory to the scene of the murder committed by Esménard. There, in the victim's room, he stumbles upon a clew which sends him on his way to Poujar's office and from there he finds his way to the arcade where he first had met the devil. Finally, we witness his desperate effort to force his way into his own room where he returns at last to his own dying body.

From the borders of death he hears his mother bid him pray, and, recalling the first words of the "Our Father" a mysterious joy overwhelms him, although no sound of words escapes his lips. Julian Green does not dramatize Fabian's death. By what is left unsaid we know that at the end of Fabian's fantastic peregrinations he has somehow come to accept the Grace of God. The terrible battle waged between the forces of good and evil in his soul has reached an end. There is but meager evidence that the forces of evil have been conquered. Beside his bed there is a scrap of paper on which Fabian has noted the names Camille, Emmanuel, Brittomart. A line has been drawn through the name of Brittomart, the Evil One.

The story is expertly told. Julian Green uses the device of changing personalities in order to present the restlessness and boredom prevalent in a world where the devil is invited to usurp the place of God. The devil plays an important role in *If I Were You*. The author, with the writers Denis de Rougemont and Père Bouyer, faces the fact that the devil exists. But he does not fall into the manichean error of reducing the personal responsibility of his characters for evil. In his *Journal* Julian Green tells us that when he was a little boy he used to take delight in imagining that the devil inhabited a certain closet in his mother's room. He would throw open the door of the closet, and, standing back for safety's sake, shout "Devil" three times in succession. After the third shout he would inevitably fly from the room, thus losing the opportunity of seeing the devil, who he firmly believed would appear on the third count. Perhaps Green needed to create his character of Fabian Espécel in order to bring the devil out into the open!

In *If I Were You* the devil is not as easily recognizable as the typical mediaeval character of Asmodée conjured up in the imagination of a child. He might rather belong with C. S. Lewis' *Screwtop* to the "lowerarchy of devils" busily occupied in counting the pulse of secularism in the modern world. At times he resembles the spirit who moves in Bernanos' *Star of Satan*. He appears in the form of a sinister old man who repels us by his very glance. We recognize him by his stare and his enormous hands which seem eager to push his victim on the way to sin. He senses the boredom in a soul as a sailor senses the first ominous warning of a hurricane. His speech is unctuous, sweet, syrupy, like a glass of cordial. The sound effects of wind and rain often announce him, in an atmosphere reminiscent of the "brown air" of Dante's *Inferno*. Brittomart uses to the best advantage the ruse of the devil laid bare by Baudelaire in his short prose poems.

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There is, in fact, an interesting comparison to be made between Baudelaire's description of the Evil One in *The Generous Gambler* and the passage in which Green describes Fabian's introduction to the company of devils.

With French as his medium of expression, it is not surprising that Julian Green, possessed of a delicate soul and a sensitive intelligence, should be drawn to write in the tradition of the best French writers. The infinite spaces of Pascal both frighten and attract him. The lines of his favorite poet, Baudelaire, are so familiar to him that they are "part of his mental make-up." He has great admiration for Rimbaud, Bloy, and Péguy. Maritain, Gide, Malraux, Cocteau, and Mauriac are frequently mentioned in his *Journal*.

Gifted with a good visual memory, Julian Green paints the obscure corners of Paris with all the skill that one would expect from a writer who daily studies the masterpieces in the Louvre. His bourgeois interiors and the scenes evoked by childhood memories rival those of Mauriac. Classic in expression, he is a realist with a passion for truth, who creates characters with "blood in their veins instead of ink." We know from his *Journal* that the problems which haunt the author are the very ones with which his characters are confronted: solitude, physical and moral, death, and the supernatural. His heroes are itinerants who wander through the uncertainties of this life in their search for the Absolute.

Julian Green has said that he is in all of his characters. Those who come to life in *If I Were You* would seem to resemble the disillusioned bourgeois and the sad-faced clowns of Rouault, painted in strong colors, outlined with heavy black strokes. In the manner of Rouault, and, on occasion, of Goya, Julian Green uses heavy shadows in order to emphasize the light. There are times when, like Dostoevski, he plunges into the deepest secrets of human suffering in order to seek out the Light of Grace

in that darkness. His novels, he indicates, are like icebergs, two-thirds submerged in the invisible sea of the subconscious. He is interested in the manifestations of the profound ego and in that irrational part of man from whence his dreams come. His characters move in a complex, intangible world which, however, has nothing of the determinism of Zola and does not exclude liberty in the spiritual order.

If Julian Green is in all of his characters, we do not find in them *all* of the author. To understand the full import of *If I Were You*, it is enlightening to read the pages of Julian Green's *Journal* (1940-1943), written after his return to the Catholic faith. He had been converted to Catholicism at the age of fifteen, but for a period of years after the first World War he had suffered from doubt and uncertainty. In 1939, after reading Saint Catherine of Genoa's *Treatise on Purgatory* and conversing with Jacques Maritain concerning Plato and Aristotle, he felt "a whole edifice of error crumbling away," and gradually found his way back to the Church. On November 12, 1942, he notes, "I do not know where I am going. I am a blind man who seizes the hem of Christ's garment and who no longer asks any questions about the path to take or the purpose of the voyage, for the way and the purpose—are together—God." Like Dante, launched on his perilous journey, he keeps his gaze fixed on the stars. He writes, "The greatest explorer on this earth does not make as long voyages as he who descends to the depths of his heart and leans over the abyss where the face of God is mirrored amongst the stars."

In his novel, *If I Were You*, Julian Green would wish to show us the devil "going about the world seeking the ruin of souls." From his *Journal* we know his faith in the power of prayer. He echoes the words in which the Church daily calls on Saint Michael to "defend us in the day of battle":

There is no peace other than in prayer.
These few minutes which we give to

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God are like a fortress where we take refuge and where we can be sure that the present century will not reach us; in vain it roars and strikes against the walls, the angels are there mounting guard on the ramparts of the *Pater*.

—SISTER M. CAMILLE, O.S.F.

College of Saint Teresa

Seeds of Contemplation. By Thomas Merton. New Directions. \$3.00.

Again the Trappist silences are beating on our doors—this time in the form of an austere, burlap bound volume printed by New Directions and released, appropriately enough, on the day of opening of the annual season of prayer and penance, Ash Wednesday. It is Thomas Merton's *Seeds of Contemplation*. The appearance of this book, it seems quite unnecessary to remark, is an event of no little importance not only to the *avant-garde literati* who acclaim its author as possibly one of the greatest poets of our age, but also and especially to the hundreds of thousands of readers who since last September know Thomas Merton as the pilgrim of that extraordinary climb up *The Seven Storey Mountain*. This book was written at its summit.

Reviewers of that unprecedentedly successful best-seller mentioned certain "wise and prudent" among us who questioned the wisdom of "an autobiography of the spirit completed when a man is only thirty-three." The remark was pointedly barbed at the last chapters of the book wherein Merton discoursed on the nature and excellences of the contemplative life. "What can this neophyte tell us of contemplation?" But how truly relative is time when God's grace is in possession this latest volume of the young Trappist monk startlingly proves. There were also those who expressed concern—which may well have been due to a certain personal annoyance—at what they considered a mis-leading overstress on the contemplative vocation, fearing perhaps that modern youth would be departing in droves for the Trappist solitudes. That on this point as well there

was no distortion of perspective, *Seeds of Contemplation* will make abundantly clear. For if the book proves anything at all it proves that contemplative orders have no monopoly on contemplation. It is the supreme business of *every man*. The book is addressed to each man with reference to "what should be the ordinary fulfillment of the Christian life of grace," man's highest function on earth, and certainly his only occupation in heaven, namely contemplation. It is, as its author says, "a collection of notes and personal reflections" jotted down at odd times which may serve as occasions, seeds for the planting of contemplation in the soil of the soul. And yet it is a book on *prayer* only in the sense that prayer equates with *life*, that only life that really matters and on which all other things depend—that of grace, the finite participation in the life of the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity. Thomas Merton is unobtrusively simple in his exposition:

Perfection is not something you can acquire like a hat by walking into a place and trying on several and walking out again ten minutes later with one on your head that fits.

It consists rather in being what God wants one to be here and now, a thing which one can be sure of only after some original research toward the discovery of his *true self*. This is each man's personal problem—to find out *who he is*, and its solution involves an escape from the fictional self, the one "who cannot exist because God does not know anything about him. And to be unknown of God is altogether too much privacy." This discovery can be made only in discovering God, for one's true identity is hid in Him. It is a two-way discovery, "for one's discovery of God is in a way, God's discovery of him." But this research is no child's play for it entails a dying to self that is terrifyingly complete.

In presenting this asceticism, Thomas Merton establishes and maintains the balance of a genuine and authentic Christian hu-

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manism which knows "that everything that is is holy." The renunciation is an interior stripping. The saint, he is careful to point out, needs not to strain nor use hackneyed metaphor to connect God and creatures

while those who are not saints either think that created things are unholy, or else they don't bother about the question one way or another because they are only interested in themselves.

Plair's candidate for sanctity is no grim, solemn-faced, stony statue of a saint with a touch-me-not, holier-than-thou attitude toward others. The saints who fit his pattern are the ones who

are glad to be saints, not because their sanctity makes them admirable to others but *because the gift of sainthood makes it possible for them to admire everybody else*. It gives them a vision that can find good in the most terrible criminals. It delivers them from the burden of judging others, condemning others.

Nor do they

get excited about the things that people licitly eat and drink, wear on their bodies, or hang on the walls of their houses.

For to the saint all this is indifferent; he takes whatever there is in creatures to help him find God and leaves the rest aside, taking care not to judge those who have different needs in this regard than he.

And there is always the little knotted scourge that swings at the self-righteous, at those who try to realize themselves by imposing themselves on others, "those who think their own pride is the Holy Ghost," "the saints that are smothered under the avalanche of their own importunate zeal," "those who imagine they will find God by winding themselves up in a cocoon of stuffy intellectual pleasures," and the man avid of praise "who is so obvious that he has been a character in every farce since Aristophanes."

Thomas Merton gives the poet his own little private conference, brief and to the

point: if he wishes to be an apostle he should be first of all a good poet, not the other way around and "try to be a poet by being first of all an Apostle." For as he presents himself so will he be judged, and if as a poet who is not a good one "his apostolate will be ridiculed." He scathes such as never succeed in being the particular poet God wanted them to be, the one called for by all the circumstances of their individual lives, by wasting their time trying to imitate somebody else, especially the popular writers.

But the very heart of the book, the burden of its title, and the goal toward which every word is pointed is the concluding chapters in which the author deals with contemplation *ex officio*. Here is presented simply, persuasively, powerfully, and with meticulous theological precision, by a modern voice speaking our modern idiom, the mystical doctrine of the Spanish Carmelite, St. John of the Cross. In fact, so limpid is the utterance that the superficial reader, or one who comes to the book with his own private set of prejudices, may completely miss its profundity. Here the growth of prayer, the emptying of the soul, the nights of sense and spirit, and the states of quiet and full union are described with clear and fearless vision. It is precisely here that the reader cannot help but suspect that these chapters could not have been written by any man without an experimental knowledge of their content. Not that the doctrine is not treated objectively, it is, and starkly so, but running beneath it like a counterpoint of exquisite melody is that surge of the heart and sense of personal conviction that tells the perceptive reader that he is being spoken to by one rare among his fellows, one in whom these seeds of contemplation have already taken deep root, broken into leaf, and wonderfully flowered. Here, on the level of technique, is the true artist with such perfect command of his media that the personal vision has been transmuted effortlessly into the universal.

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But if he points out the summits of the ascent he is quick in warning of the precarious footing of this so excellent way, and speaks sadly of the spiritual pride that eats out the sanctity of the saints before it is mature, the danger even in the desire of contemplation when one forgets that it means "the complete destruction of all selfishness, and the most pure poverty and cleanness of heart," and the "wrong flame" that may be kindled even in our contemplation.

Nor does the book leave one convinced that if he wishes to become a contemplative he must, as one put it, go out and live in the garage. "There is no solitude except interior solitude," says Merton. You may not have it in a Carthusian hermitage, though you certainly should, and in the roar of the subway, the blare of the radio, and the almost infinite complexity of our modern life it may be yours. He makes it clear that contemplation is not "a stuffing yourself inside your own mind and closing the door like a turtle," nor is it "a heaven of separate individuals, each one viewing his own private vision of God." Rather

this business of doping your mind and isolating yourself from everything that lives, merely deadens you to all the opportunities for love which is the heart of contemplation.

For contemplation is, on the contrary

a sea of love which flows through the One Person of all the elect, all the angels and saints, and their contemplation would be incomplete if it were not shared, or if it were shared with fewer souls, or with spirits capable of less vision and joy.

He is explicit in showing how one may achieve a beautiful balance between contemplation and external activity, which are really two aspects of the same love of God. But activity must be born of contemplation and resemble it, and in it one must look for and find the same thing one seeks in contemplation—a contact and union with God.

In a review such as this it is impossible to give anything but the most meager concept of the spiritual riches of this book. It is written for no select spiritual coterie; there is something in it for everyone and yet there is something special and unique for each: the priest, the poet, the scholar, the statesman, the peasant, the man with money, the man without it, even the saint. Together with the exposition of doctrine are the shrewd practical insights and the delightful Augustinian wit we have learned to associate with Thomas Merton. Here is a great and humble man who knows whereof he speaks, a man filled with an immense love and compassion for his fellowmen, speaking to them not as to abstractions but as to brothers, of the things that most closely concern both him and them, of the only thing actually, that matters—God. And though he knows little, he says, of what goes on in the world, and though some of the things he happens to come upon give him the conviction that a great number are "living in ash-cans," he nevertheless, rather the more because of it, loves them with the all-embracing charity of Christ, and shares with them the fruits of his own contemplation. This book is evidence of a rare gift given to our confused age—that of Christ living in and working through one of its sons, Thomas Merton. It is a book for which one should get on his knees and thank God.

—SISTER M. THÉRÈSE, S.D.S.

Marquette University

Lord, Teach us to Pray. By Paul Claudel.
Translated by Ruth Bethell. Longmans,
Green and Co. \$2.00.

A certain Balzacian scholar once pretended that he got as much pleasure from reading the "biographies" in an encyclopedia compiled from the *Human Comedy* as he did in reading the novels themselves. For he was able to fill in with the knowledge he had already gained from the work in its entirety. In making contact with

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Claudel through this small book, one has somewhat the same kind of pleasure as the Balzacian scholar who tasted the overpowering, seething, strong waters of Balzac through the water of a quiet pool. In *Lord, Teach us to Pray* we have on a small scale almost all of the key thoughts and, in addition, a sampling of the verbal rhapsodies, the lyricism, the farce, the realism, and, above all, the sacramental approach that marks his work from beginning to end.

In *Connaissance de l'Est* the poet gloried in underlining the relationships between an item of the Chinese landscape—a pine, a pig, a bell, a banyan tree—and the invisible world of Grace. In *Lord, Teach us to Pray* he takes paintings—a Delacroix, a Rembrandt, a sketch of our Lady of Lourdes made for him by his daughter—and draws out of them impressive lyrical rapports with spiritual and supernatural realities. And he does it with the *procédés* we know to be Claudelian: laying hold of beauty or truth with his whole being—body and soul—then expressing it with torrents of analogies (why should he not “slip from one idea to another by way of juxtaposition as well as by way of logic?”), broken syntax, variation on words like “oil,” “hands,” “water,” scatterings of psalm verses, snatches of Rimbaud or St. Augustine and, withal giving an impression of fullness, totality, and that unicity which sees all things in relation to the One.

This is a book on meditation. Lest a systematic treatise frighten the reader away, Claudel draws him close by parable and metaphor. What is meditation? It is a watch we take up not alone with our ears and intelligence keyed up, but with our whole being “listening to the heartbeat of Being and preparing to entice Him. It is no longer a case of effect attentive to Cause, but of all the child in us learning to say, Father.” “It is becoming responsible and intelligible in our own eyes.” It is getting one’s metaphysical bearings with one’s center of gravity outside of oneself.”

It is going over things before a Judge Who is no ordinary magistrate, but a highly qualified authority. It is a “bath of truth and justice.” It is emerging from the limbo of work and official dinners and enjoying for a moment “the privilege of existing.”

One does not read far before becoming aware of those attitudes habitual to the poet: constant objectivity, humility before Being, an intimacy with the Father warm as in the Pater Noster of *la Messe là-bas*, a devouring interest and joy in mystery as in this expression of his favorite *connaissance* and *co-nnaissance* analogy:

He is unknown—how splendid!—but not more so than I am unknown to myself. And if these two unknowns unite, knowledge may be born of it, fruitful knowledge. *Night to night sheweth knowledge*, says the Psalmist

or in what he makes God say about moving a human will to move freely, a mystery we saw beautifully enacted in the Guardian Angel scenes of *Sain Slipper*:

You must be more conscious . . . of that secret continuity I maintain with the roots of your existence and your liberty and that heart which unwittingly you open to me at every breath and that I fill.

The particularly Claudelian idea of a personal vocation and a destiny bound up with other souls and God in “imperishable kinship” finds such expression as “for this lock we were made a key” and “Do not leave to woman the privilege of belonging.”

We find his favorite contrast: a man as he existed in God’s mind before creation, God’s image and then the “no one but a lump of deadness and stiffness, inorganic, sham, shrivelled, an idol in fact” that we have made for ourselves, like that bristling, rigid, unreal Prouheze whom God did not make and who had to hug the liquid fire of Purgatory before the authentic Prouheze, child of God, could be set free.

He touches upon the Communion of Saints, the Mystical Body, the angels. The idea that their wings should be rep-

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resented in art as a "contraption adapted equally to flying and to a sort of spiritual breathing" is surely carried out in Lucien Coutaud's costuming for the angel in Jean-Louis Barrault's recent production of *Le Soulier de Satin*.

But the chapter that lights up large portions of his poetry is inspired by Titian's "Adam and Eve." It treats the creation of woman and her part in the fall and redemption of man. She serves a far greater purpose than that of momentary enjoyment. She makes a proud, hard man like Rodrigo aware of the hole that exists in his side ever since her creation, and precisely because she cannot fill it, she teaches him longing for Another.

And henceforth he has inside him something defined by an absence, a lack, a void that no flesh, nothing mortal, can suffice to fulfill, not even when the creature issued from him reaches out her hand to pluck the forbidden fruit and give it to him . . . Henceforth nothing mortal, no flesh can remedy the great cleft in his side which she made by her first appearance. And here you hold her to your heart, Adam, and she is a promise that never—you know it and she knows it—never will be kept.

This, he says, is the meaning of famous figures of Christian poetry: Beatrice, Dulcinea, Bérénice, and the one who under different names recurs in Claudel's own works.

His Mary, though a daughter of Eve like ourselves, is no housewife or poor woman with household cares. She is the "Lady in the fullness of knowledge and the fullness of light, who sees Him." She keeps her rank, "Sovereign of Angels, Queen of Doctors, Mother of God."

As for the practical in the book—there is much of it. He tells in minute detail how to say the rosary and to meditate. He says petition is good. It is "telling God at what place we so desire His Kingdom to arrive, and so desire Him to intervene in His own person that His Kingdom does

come just to that point where we still do not see it." He urges us to pray for others—for "the whole human heap of which I am a bit," because such prayers are a combined act of faith, hope, and charity. The man who professes to write poetry because it is a means of progressively evangelizing all the regions of his intelligence and all the powers of his soul, has an interesting thought about prayers said without devotion and with distraction. They are good. Everything serves. What with every department of our Being in need of evangelization these prayers "might well be means specially adapted to our subconsciousness." And most of all he would have us know that contemplation does not mean an evasion of the world. On the contrary, it re-creates a man so that he has the heart to put on the livery of his bitter servitude, his dinner jacket, and engage in interesting conversation with his charming neighbors at table. His secret is his own.

For this to be a small encyclopedia of Claudel's ideas as the *Répertoire* is of Balzacian characters, there are wanting the major themes of the sea and of exile (he does, however, tell us that on a railway journey we can use the long string of telegraph poles for counting if we do not have a rosary), discussion of the word and the Word, as in *l'Art Poétique*, and, what one misses most in a book written by the poet of *Corona Benignitatis Anni Dei* and *Les Cinq Grandes Odes*, the direct and powerful inspiration of the liturgy.

The ordinary Christian will find much truth and beauty in *Lord, Teach us to Pray*, but it is a work that becomes completely intelligible only in the light of Claudel's other works and to one who has taken the "trouble to learn Claudel's thought language." It is beautifully translated into English by Mrs. Bethell.

—SISTER MARIE PHILIP

The College of St. Catherine

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The Common Chord. By Frank O'Connor.
Knopf. \$2.75.

The Man Who Invented Sin. By Sean O'Faolain. Devin-Adair. \$2.75.

It has been said that it is almost impossible for an Irishman to write badly. Frank O'Connor and Sean O'Faolain give a wealth of droll, shrewd and poignant testimony to the wisdom of the aphorism.

It is both difficult and easy to compare the short story art of the two. In the creative genius of both one hears the echoes of Chekov and Rabelais—the alternately rollicking and God-haunted cavalcade of obscure, tragi-comic Irish villagers, the infectious belly-laughter of the rectory, the boudoir and the pub; O'Connor chuckling quietly and not without compassion at the frailties and foibles of the church and the faithful—O'Faolain keening poetically or bellowing with laughter not unwarmed by filial love.

O'Connor has mimicked and loved Ireland with quiet, puckish indirection in the toney *New Yorker*; O'Faolain's louder but no less discerning art was capable of chortling and rhapsodizing in the great American slicks.

They are both anti-clericals in the good sense, that is to say, the traditional, indiscriminate Irish worship of the cloth and the wimple is for them rich satirical capital, never indexed without a hint of family affection.

The poetry of O'Connor, in his stories, is implicit in the real, immediate ring of his character-pungent dialogue; the poetry of O'Faolain flowers out of a richer, lyrical and descriptive gift: O'Connor in "The Custom of the Country":

"And mind," said Anna, "you're to call him 'father'."

"I shan't forget," said Ernest.

"And whatever the hell you do, don't contradict him," said Anna.

"There's nothing they hate like being contradicted."

O'Faolain in "Lady Lucifer":

"It is a lost corner, barely coming to life, some dim noise half-heard

through sleep, a moth on a window-pane at morning, an occasional barge slowly dud-dudding along the river, disturbing the coots and the wild flowers with its arrowy wake."

Both writers show an interesting pre-occupation with a woman character who obtains a certain clerical imprimatur for imagining that her unintriguing husband has become a glamorous movie star. O'Connor chooses Rudolph Valentino for his heroine's symbol of self-delusion; O'Faolain nominates Clark Cable. And in employing the movie star device, the two authors seem to have drawn their theological thinking from similar sources of clerical opinion: O'Connor in "The Holy Door":

"And Father Ring said there was no harm in it so long as she was doing it for a good purpose and didn't get the pleasure out of it . . ."

O'Faolain in "The Woman Who Married Clark Cable":

"At all events, he hurried on, be that as it might, it appeared to him that, theologically speaking, and always provided that she kept that great end in view, and had no other end in view at any time—he stressed the words at any time—there could be no objection to her deciding that she was living with Mr. Mark Cable."

Catholics who writhe at O'Connor's and O'Faolain's sulphurous realism in portraying the Irish clergy should reflect for a while on what would be their honest artistic reaction, as Irish writers, to a world in which the clergy had been driven to the excesses of clericalism in order that the church in Ireland might survive. If the Irish clergy constitute considerable of a militant theocracy, it is inevitable that honest, percipient Irish writers will reflect such clerical autocracy in their work.

O'Connor and O'Faolain do not write for children, although O'Faolain's tender idyll "The Trout" might well find its way into a primary school anthology. Therefore it might be prudent to put their writings on the mantelpiece after carefully,

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maturely meditating on what they have to say for adults.

While the collective impression of the stories in *The Common Chord* does not rival the wise and witty excellence of O'Connor's earlier collection *Crab Apple Jelly*, the present volume nonetheless shows a delicate discretion in the handling of sex in fiction which could teach many a best-selling American novelist a moral and craftsmanlike lesson. O'Connor rarely describes the world of the bedroom with broad, multicolored strokes. He suggests luridly, perhaps, depending on the pallet of the reader's imagination. It is in itself a singular achievement to write a series of stories preoccupied with the labyrinthine ways of the libido and at the same time skillfully avoid the photographically seductive scene so erotically abounding in most of our present day fiction. For example, in "The Holy Door" O'Connor refers to an extra-marital relationship as "a bit of skirmish."

O'Faolain, too, is a man of discernment when it comes to the question of handling sexual relations in his art. In "Lady Lucifer," a tragic story of a nurse who falls in love with a potential maniac, O'Faolain has his heroine say:

"He began to cry. He said he'd wandered all over the world and he hadn't a friend and he had no home. You see, Doctor, he's only a kid under all. He was afraid of the night coming on. Just as if he was a kid. And when he put his two arms around me, I had to comfort him, Doctor."

O'Connor seems to handle the confessional situation more deftly than O'Faolain. While the former's "News for the Church" is not as regaling or finished as his previously published little masterpiece "First Confession" it nonetheless continues to accomplish for him the difficult feat of poking a little fun at the human side of the confessional without destroying the authenticity of the sacrament, the priest and the penitent. Father Cassidy succeeds engagingly in showing a garrulous little fornica-

tor that there is hideousness in her sin as well as pleasure.

In his story "Innocence," O'Faolain takes a rather grim view of the terrors that the sacrament of penance will soon hold for his little boy. The piece is more of an informal essay than a story, one in which O'Faolain ruminates with mellowness and acerbity on the need for a comparatively innocent child to form the habit of confession. There is a heavy sadness in the weather of this piece, the sadness of original sin—the painful recognition on the part of a father that his child must sometimes imagine that it has sinned in order to go to confession, the painful intimation that all too soon the child will have real sins to confess. There seems to be only one thing lacking in the father's perspective—a communicated awareness of the Resurrection, the compelling Fact that might reasonably abate the father's anguish.

In the two confessional stories of O'Connor and O'Faolain we note again a difference of technique. The former communicates meaning more frequently through the spontaneous interplay of character and dialogue, the latter through a brilliant, incisive power of description.

In his absorbing development of character, O'Connor is perhaps more Chekovian than his gifted colleague. Yet when it comes to singing language, metaphorical skill, and fetching, conceptual twists of style, it is O'Faolain who would arrest the attentions of the schoolmarm. A Frenchman sitting in a daycoach is "the old Clemenceau in the corner." A human head is invariably a "poll"; one of his nuns walks along in "a mouth-buttoned fury"; and a beautiful girl is "tall as a spear, dark as night . . ."

O'Faolain knows with Graham Greene the treachery of pity. In "Up the Bare Stairs" Viscount Nugent says about his bitter, penurious boyhood:

"I'm full of what they put into me—pity and hate and rage and pride and contempt for the weak and anger against all bullying. But above all

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pity, chock-a-block with it. I know it. Pity is the most disintegrating of all human emotions. It's the most disgusting of all human emotions. I know it."

It has been alleged with perhaps some justice by various critics of these two fictional giants that O'Connor is irreverent, even blasphemous, that O'Faolain is the same and, in addition, he cocks a very bleak eye at his own race. Yet this reviewer cannot honestly feel that we should be so *ad hominem* in our critical reactions to their art. It is perhaps the great immaturity of American Catholic fictional criticism that we tend to ascribe certain vicious personal motives to an artist's more provocative work—especially when his observations accidentally grate our sensitivities or threaten the comfortable *status quo* of our spirit.

Admittedly, the charm, the sting, the beauty of a fictional artist's product are attributable to acquired and ingrained prejudices as well as to a passion for truth—the former invariably colors the latter. Yet, if we are morally aghast at the work of a first-rate artist, and we may on occasion have good reason to be, our indignation will not convert him nor will it re-order the peculiar genius of his work. The way of charity on the part of the critic and reader, the way of patient, critical understanding as opposed to the sound and fury diatribes of the rosary bead publications would seem wisest.

For in the case of first-rate artists like O'Connor and O'Faolain a totally unsympathetic reader-reaction is usually based on a kind of spiritual astigmatism which cannot encompass the reality, the passion and the beauty of the artist's vision.

— JOSEPH DEVER

Amore e Desolazione. By Nicola Lisi.
Firenze: Vallecchi.

Amore e Desolazione is the latest book by Nicola Lisi, an Italian writer who had already become rather well known in Italy

before the war. Mr. Lisi began writing in 1923, when he collaborated on a periodical called *Calendario dei pensieri e delle pratiche solari*, that is, an almanac whose purpose was to coordinate the natural and the liturgical calendars. In 1930, together with Augusto Hermet, he compiled an anthology of Italian Catholic writers, and he was among the founders of the Catholic review *Il Frontespizio* (cf. Maria Serafina Mazza, S.C., *Not for Art's Sake*, King's Crown Press, Columbia University, New York, 1948). Lisi's first book, *L'Acqua*, was followed by several others, among which the best known are *Il paese dell'anima* and *Diario d'un parroco di campagna*. With these books he immediately won wide acclaim among Italian literary circles and took his place among young promising novelists. The most striking features of his works, and especially of *Il paese dell'anima* (*Country of the Soul*), which is generally recognized as his masterpiece, are a pure and serene faith, a feeling of peace and contentment with the world, a new way of looking at old and well worn things and, most important of all, a limpid and self-contained style that contrasts sharply with the searching and analytical efforts of most Italian contemporary writers.

This latest book seems to widen the scope of Lisi's art, without, however, adding much to its depth or to its strength. It is written in the first person singular and it relates the experiences of the author during the first seven months of 1944. The background is the city of Florence, before the final battle, while it was still occupied by the German troops and was being bombed, day and night, by the Allies. The *desolazione*, is, therefore, the daily martyrdom and the slow agony of Florence, which, against the hopes of its inhabitants and of all cultured people in the world, was never proclaimed "open city"; the *amore*, is the voice of love and of faith that springs irresistibly from the Christian heart of the author, that provides him with peace and

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serenity, even in the face of danger and of sorrow, and that helps him, mysteriously, to bestow a feeling of security even on the harassed and anguished people who surround him. The voice of Lisi, "the voice of the dove without bitterness," is therefore, the real protagonist of the book; through this voice we are introduced into a mysterious country, the country of the soul, that faraway country which is Lisi's real and only one and which he has already shown us in his previous book, *Il paese dell'anima*. If the reader sees *Amore e desolazione* in this light, he will not be slow in realizing that it could hardly be called a war book; the war, in this case, is nothing but a sharpened and more painful reality against which Lisi's voice fights its victorious battle. The great strength of the book consists in the almost perfect balance which Lisi succeeds in keeping between the external reality, fearful and sorrowful as it is, and the interior peace of his heart. By his admirable restraint and sobriety, by showing us the war only by glimpses and at intervals, he makes it appear far more terrible and anguishing than it would be in the crude and direct narrations of other more realistic writers.

Lisi recreates the world simply by looking at it as if it had never been looked at before and by singing it in very short sentences that seem to follow the rhythm and the pattern of interior thought and meditation. His diary is composed of very simple elements: souvenirs of his youth and of his early loves, the mountainous country in Mugello, near Florence, where he was born, a few prophetic and Christian dreams.

But this trite and often monotonous reality seems only to be the door to the Great Unknown and to the world beyond; and Lisi is far less concerned with it than he is with the great mysteries of Purgatory and Paradise, with the presence of his Guardian Angel (one of the favorite motifs in Lisi's world) and with the ultimate destiny of man.

By his frequent allusions to the power of evil and to the devil himself, by his passion for narrating edifying episodes and charming monastic *exempla*, Lisi succeeds in recreating for us almost a form of neoprimitivism that contrasts painfully with the reality of modern warfare, but that seems to spring naturally from Lisi's consciousness.

The fantastic and unwordly atmosphere existing in Lisi's works, and especially in *Il paese dell'anima*, has been compared by the Italian critic Carlo Bo to the mysterious country in Alain Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes*: but Mr. Bo himself had pointed out the main differences between the two authors by underscoring that feeling of homesickness, of nostalgia for a paradise lost, that is present in the castle of *Le Grand Meaulnes*, but that is completely missing in Lisi's countryside.

On the other hand, it seems to us that in reading *Amore e desolazione* one is inevitably reminded of Georges Bernanos' *Journal d'un curé de campagne* and that one cannot help wondering about the depths of sacrifice and of love that Bernanos' priest would reach under similar circumstances. But, while it is useless to look for that burning charity and holocaust that distinguishes the curé d'Ambri-court, in *Amore e desolazione* one can successfully find an abandonment to the ways of God, a search for His will in all things that make up the world and, most important, a feeling of peace and serenity that seems to affect the reader himself.

—ANGELA BIANCHINI FALES

Johns Hopkins University

The Lion Tamer. By Bryan MacMahon. Dutton. \$2.75.

Bridie Steen. By Anne Crone. Schribner's. \$3.00.

There is an unmistakable renaissance in Ireland, a literary renaissance which is, perhaps, part of a general revival of the arts. It tallies oddly with Eire's literary censorship, but there it is—undeniable, giving the

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lie to all the forebodings evoked by the law of censorship. The best fiction in the English language is coming out of Ireland. Recent publications of two newcomers in the realm of letters, *Bridie Steen*, a novel by Anne Crone and *The Lion Tamer*, a book of short stories by Bryan MacMahon, are likely to live longer than most books published this year. Of *Bridie Steen* Lord Dunsany says in the Introduction: "... this book is one of the great novels of our time, not quite to be forgotten in a hundred years." There is gallantry in this tribute to a first novel; yet no sensitive reader of the poignant story of a girl caught on the horns of Ulster's dilemmas will charge the Dean of Irish Letters with over-statement. If Anne Crone continues to write to the level of *Bridie Steen*, she will have a stronger claim to immortality than Jane Austen or Charlotte Brontë. Her mind is richer, her sympathy is universal, her art already of superb quality.

The Lion Tamer has brought another young, untried author into the front rank of Irish writers. These two have much in common: youth and professional inexperience, linked with a mellowed maturity; a sense of proportion, a recognition of the dignity of poverty and of the majesty of nature, a sense of the magnificence of life, and of the beauty of faith, compassion and loyalty.

In one sense, Bryan MacMahon's title, which is that of the first of the twenty-two stories, is more symbolic of himself and of his achievement in this volume than of the stories. He may be thought of as a lion tamer, vanquishing the lion of public opinion with inimitable deftness and graceful power. His stories breathe the very air of Ireland, even the salty air of Kerry; yet they have universality; they are about people rather than about Irishmen or Kerry-men. They are of Ireland all compact; yet there is not a leprechaun to be glimpsed anywhere, nor any of the Little People; there is not a ghost to be seen or heard, nor a banshee, nor a bard. Cathleen ní

Houlihan does not wander the roads, nor Dark Rosaleen.

In their stead we have a girl-jeweler who is Irish-Chinese, and an Irish-born priest, a pastor in Aaron, Montana (who enjoys as his own private joke, "Come back to Aaron"); and an old blind man who sees more than anybody else in Friary Lane; a twelve-year-old colleen whose Irish dancing melts the frictions of a divided townsfolk into a perfect unity; a bride who has to make her first loaf under the unfriendly eyes of her husband's parents (and "The Virgin never swathed Jesukin as carefully as Noreen swathed her cake"); a doting Grandmother surprised by the holiness of First Communion Day into the renunciation of her grandson's Holy Kiss. Here is a story about a peculiarly Irish sentiment, the reverence for the first kiss of a child who has received Our Lord for the first time and the care with which the holy kiss is guarded as the mother's prerogative; of this gossamer thing, the art of Bryan MacMahon has made a compact little structure strong enough to bear the weight of reality. Mary Donoghue isn't merely an Irish grandmother; she is any woman ennobled to an act of magnanimity.

This nonchalant Kerry lion tamer, who perhaps owes some of his finesse to his profession, teaching, is more interested in people than in plots. Besides the characters mentioned, we meet several loafers, a fay (or fanatical) clarinet-player, two or three boy-gangs, at least two little girls, a couple of teen-agers ("the soft silver gongs of first love were ringing through the convent"), a mean old couple, a young wife on her death-bed, a ne'er-do-well young husband, a golf-playing priest, three actors from a travelling show, a couple of derelict fishermen, hard-working farmers, nuns, and a Boy Scout troop with their Master. There is a wide variety, with, perhaps, more old people than young; certainly, the more interesting are the older people. There is one psychotic. Bryan MacMahon doesn't use his characters to

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contrive interesting plots around them. He simply encourages them to reveal themselves; in doing it, they reveal Ireland, and not only Ireland; they remind us of the magnificence of life, anywhere—if one has the gumption to live magnificently free in the sight of God. The lion tamer's people are evocative; the old story-teller in "The Good Dead in the Green Hills" whose funeral makes perhaps the best story in the volume, evokes the memory of Ireland's bards and heroes and of all those who have used nobly the Irish gift of power over words and music. One remembers, without knowing how, that Columba of Iona was walking behind his plough when a brother Bishop called on him one day. And one remembers that when the intuition of his death came to Columba, his old white horse, "the one which used to carry the milk pails to and fro between the byre and the monastery," runs up to him, lays his head against his breast—knowing that his master was soon about to leave him and began to whinny and to shed copious tears (as Adamnan records it).

The stories have a perfect freshness, ranging from humor to tragedy. For humor, "The Lion Tamer" and "Sunday Morning" have the rare Celtic flavor. For tragedy, "The Ring" is a perfect little gem which evokes memories of *Deirdre of the Sorrows* and *Riders to the Sea*. Was there ever a deeper love of simple music than we have in "Sing, Milo, Sing"? Was there ever a weirder combination than the Irish-Chinese girl in Aaron, Montana and an apostolic priest who uses a sod of peat to win her to the recognition of her Baptism? As memories of her mother, Bridget Collins of Tobernagoneen, near Knocknagoshed in the County of Kerry, are evoked, "the Irish is out on her yellow face, out on her face like a torch." The next time she sees Father Neale, she asks the meaning of an expression her mother often used, "Reenanangel." "King of An-

gels," the priest said. Was there ever a better climax?

Undoubtedly there is a point of view which would grant that some of Bryan MacMahon's stories might rather be called sketches or studies. In "The Egotists" three good talkers, loafing in the sun, reveal their essential egotism, talking together without paying any attention to one another. That is all that happens in the story. But through it, Bryan MacMahon suggests some interesting aspects of short story writing. By ignoring what his companions are saying, one of the egotists misses two fine subjects for a story as he laments the fact that he never has any experience exotic enough to give him material. Perhaps one of these loafers is Bryan MacMahon himself playing with the idea of writing, comparing the relative advantages and disadvantages of poetry and the short story. "My elbows would not be so cramped-up in the short story," he says. "After all, what is a poem but a literary corset? . . . I should detest having the basket of my fancy so completely encased." "But the short story . . . So as a beginning I strung the daisy chain of my pet comparisons, saying: as good as bread; as fat as a parsnip; as quaint as a cowbell; as barren as a jennet; as bald as a bladder; as dramatic as . . . as dramatic as a woman."

Here is revealed one of the strong interests of the young Kerry author and of his book: an interest in the power of the word and the art of phrases. This quality together with an unabashed and disingenuous lyricism gives the stories something of the quality of poetry. Many of the stories are as evocative as poems. Here is a passage about his twelve-year-old dancer.

"Time," we said, "stand still for her. Stand still for this ever-so-precious little woman. For her alone. You cannot break her as you have broken all the others on your five great wheels: on the wheels of poverty, of child-bearing, of loneliness of heart, of tyranny of the fields, of anxiety for

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tipsy men late at fairs. Time, stand still for her. To us she is everything. So we want to hold her for ever just as she is tonight. Now at last we have beauty. Time, hear us protesting from our shabby valley. To us she is everything. Everything that is delicious to ear and eye. She is our Age of Innocence. She is our Book of Kells, she is our Spring Song, she is our Un Carnet de Bal. . . . She is our near approach in sight to what the Litany of the Blessed Virgin is in sound. She is a poem of Campbell. . . . To us she is everything."

It isn't merely his capacity for imaginative feeling that is revealed here. His power of phrase is unspoiled freshness; his images are true to himself and to his subjects; there is none of that mouldering rubbishry of language which weights the pages of the too-ready writer. "Now and again, chink-a-chink, would fall the coin of his contribution into our hateful talk." "That's the sun, that large sanguinary coin that's slipping into the slot of the west." "He found the knapsack of responsibility slipping from his shoulders."

No doubt the book shows the influence of Gaelic speech on English. Its "literary" quality is by no means the excellence of *The Lion Tamer*. It is the substance of the stories that gives them distinction, their revelation of a sensitive and imaginative observer of life whose zest he knows fully and gratefully. He sees men and places "illustrious with being." (The phrase is Charles Williams', and it suits perfectly the dignity and truth with which Bryan MacMahon treats all his characters and their environment.)

He is said to be writing a novel. It should have the quality of *Bridie Steen*, another first book which rings true to the author's idea—the conception of a young girl, delicately lovely, with a capacity for joy and love, whose life is the battleground of prejudices. Bridie's mother had married a Protestant, and the self-righteous aunt who brought her up after the deaths of her parents did her best to make the child believe that she could never over-

come the handicap of her mother's defection. The reader will long remember the pitiful crises of Bridie's life and the sharp suffering caused by "religion" when the loving bond between God and man is narrowed and hardened to a compound of self-righteousness and prejudice. There is great compassion in Anne Crone; and she can be pitiless, too, in the manner of Jane Austen, in dealing with insincerity and selfishness. In style, these two Irish writers are notably different. Miss Crone's prose is in the great tradition of the English novelists. She is fortunate in remaining uncontaminated by modern fiction, even though she is fresh from Oxford. Bryan MacMahon's prose is more individual, and compared with hers, seems not quite without a touch of the *precieuse*. In substance these two Irish writers are alike: they see human nature stamped with the image of God; they know man to be potentially great, his achievements to be an actual sharing in the largeness of a Divine Creator, his life to be potentially magnificent. A page from either writer is a powerful rebuke to the sordidness of Graham Greene, tendentious as it is, perhaps.

—SISTER JULIE, O.P.

Rosary College

Art and Faith: Letters between Jacques Maritain and Jean Cocteau. Translated by John Coleman. Philosophical Library. \$2.75.

Poetic Art. By Paul Claudel. Translated by Renee Spodheim. Philosophical Library. \$2.75.

These two books have come out at the same time, but one of them (*Art and Faith*) is the translation of an exchange of letters which are now a generation old. Cocteau, the darling of the Parisian theatre, had just been converted by his friend Maritain, and had written him a letter of thanks and self-disclosure. Maritain responds with some rather esoteric descriptions of the poet's art in which such statements as "God hates literature" and "The art He wants for

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Himself is art, with all its teeth," strike rather oddly on ears unaccustomed to French idioms. Indeed, these private letters blush a little in print; in English they even sound strange. (The translator had a hard time with Cocteau's puns and abrupt leaps from one nascent image to another; in the note on p. 35 he "can no longer keep himself from hopping on the stage"). One wonders whether it was worth the trouble to publish them now for an American reading public, to whom the sur-realiste preciosities of Cocteau are as unknown as absinthe. But they are a document in the history of two souls. The following passage from Cocteau's letter is already well-known, though not in its complete context:

Literature is impossible. One must get out of it. It is useless to try to get out of it through literature; only love and Faith enable us to get out of ourselves. To resort to dreams is not to leave home; it is searching the attic, where our childhood made contact with poetry.

Art for art's sake, or for the people, are equally absurd. I propose art for God.

Imagine, my dear Jacques, the joy of a language freed from Rimbaud (at present, a more encumbering figure than Hugo), and of the superstition of Maldoror. Youth would be able to breathe.

What am I saying? I am very shy. This letter still stinks of sacred dust. In it I denounce art according to art; I forgot what is most important: man is a work of God. A work which produces works, that is the limit! Fluid is expended at third hand.

Maritain is more consecutive. Though he has always been partial to Cocteau and other exotics, he has at the same time laid the foundation of the Thomistic aesthetics of the last quarter of a century. The letter to Cocteau was written shortly after he had finished writing *Art et Scolastique*, and the discussions of art and poetry we find in the letter are only crumbs from the banquet of that important book. If they are crumbs that will whet the unacquainted

taste for the more solid nourishment of *Art et Scolastique*, the publication of the letter will have served a purpose beyond itself.

One was not prepared for the systematic treatise of Paul Claudel which he calls *Poetic Art*. Readers expecting something like the other book will be due for a surprise. *Poetic Art* is concerned, not with poetry, but with philosophy. Its chapters even contain arguments in the old manner—summaries of their contents, to guide the reader, and they are called "Knowledge of Time," "Discourse on the Affinity with the World and on Oneself." These are the meditations of a somewhat uninstructed mind turning over, with original inspection, metaphysical matters.

The clue to the meaning of the book's title occurs on p. 31. The passage reads in part:

A long time ago, in Japan, while going up from Nikko to Chuzenji, I saw, juxtaposed by my line of vision, although at great distance from each other, the green of a maple tree filling the separating space, in order to answer the appeal of a pine, asking for an agreement. These pages are meant to be the beginning of a text on forests, the arborescent enunciation by June, of a new Art of Poetry of the Universe, of a new logic. The old one used syllogisms as an instrument of expression, the new one uses metaphor, the new word, the operation resulting of the sole, conjoint and simultaneous existence of two different things.

This new Logic he compares with syntax, to the old grammar, and it is, he says, "the autochthonous art used by all that which is born." It is not chance, but art. Nature is art; art is a working like nature. We are back to the Aristotelian principles. But in this book Claudel is not concerned with the second creation of the artist. He is concerned with cause, time, motion, knowledge. Catch him if you can. The most arcane section of the essay is Claudel's theory of knowledge, which he extends beyond consciousness to

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embrace the reciprocal relations of all things as parts of the whole. "To know," he says, "is to establish that without which the rest could not be."

The metaphysician must examine Claudel the metaphysician. Yet even the layman detects vertigo in such a statement as this (p. 108): "Indeed, before his death, man was that which was not; he is, after death, that which is no more: he is no more that which was not." To the present reviewer the most dubious element in the essay is the fanciful etymologizing, which, moreover, holds only in the plays on French words such as *être* and *naître* and *connaître*. Claudel considers *naître* as the negation of *être*! *Connaître*: to be born with. Surely we have done with such things!

The poet as philosopher is more precarious than the philosopher as poet. The poet as himself is the most genuine of the three. Docta ignorantia!

—VICTOR M. HAMM

Marquette University

The Unknown Sea. By François Mauriac. Translated by Gerard Hopkins. Henry Holt. \$3.00.

The Unknown Sea is the third of François Mauriac's novels which Henry Holt and Co. is presenting in a series of translations of his novels. The translator is Gerard Hopkins, and the previous items have been *The Woman of the Pharisees*, and *Thérèse*.

The present novel, written in 1939, deals with Mauriac's most impassioned theme, the social pressures and compromises in sin brought about by the wealthy gentry of Bordeaux and its environs. Mauriac has written many novels about these families among which he grew up and which have provided him with enough fodder to feed most of his creative work. Family position and family wealth are the two household Gods among these old landed families; anything which offends against the integrity of the one or the other must be discouraged and crushed. This is the crux of

the situation in *The Unknown Sea*; as the story opens, Oscar Revolou, because of his extravagances over his mistress in order to hold her "affection," has ruined the family fortune; learning that his mistress has run away with a young man, and overwhelmed by the double tragedy, he kills himself. Léonie Costadot hastens to force the 400,000 francs which he had borrowed from her out of his widow, thus driving the Revolou into even worse penury. Rose Revolou had been engaged to Robert Costadot, Léonie's son. The Revolou children react in different ways to their new situation; Julien, the weakest, had been a social butterfly; he is so appalled at the prospect of falling from social prominence that he takes to his bed and gradually wastes away, babied by his bewildered mother. Denis becomes fearful and irresolute, gradually loses his sense of family position, and falls into an affair with the lumpy daughter of their tenant farmer. Rose resolutely takes a job in a Bordeaux bookstore, commutes every day on the trolley from their summer home outside of Bordeaux which they have now been forced to adopt as their year-around residence. Her fiancé takes up with her again only to drop her cruelly, persuaded by his mother Léonie that he must not shackle himself to a ruined family. Rose's keen suffering over her hurt ennobs her, teaches her how to understand the Crucified a little, how to pray intimately to Him. Pierre Costadot goes through a similar catharsis: since he had always loved Rose secretly, he is troubled and hurt that she will not accept him after his brother has so rudely dismissed her. He is also tremendously upset by his brother's and his mother's calculating cruelty in their schemes to save family and money interests at all costs. He goes to Paris and runs wild, then in a mixture of religious and philosophical repentance and detachment, joins the Foreign Legion.

There is the character of M. Landin who had devoted himself like a faithful dog to Oscar Revolou from their grammar school

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days; he is painstakingly and unmercifully analyzed by Mauriac, as are Landin's sister, Mlle. Landin, Mme. Costadot, Robert Costadot and others. One finds all of Mauriac's supersensitive, unflattering, and brooding analysis of ordinary people caught in the meshes of social rules and customs which try to sidetrack faith and the true Christian spirit. Mauriac demonstrates the slow and intangible workings of grace in Rose and Pierre through a welter of psychological and topological detail. There are the usual Mauriacian devices of diaries and letters left behind, of the lasting influence of the dead even beyond the grave, of characters like Robert Costadot and Denis Revolou who lack will power almost to the point of denying its existence; of characters predestined to suffering like Rose and Pierre. There is the smell and sound of the environs of Bordeaux, and nature, Cybèle, is almost a person. Pierre is another projection of Mauriac's own youthful struggle between sensuality and virtue.

Whatever Mauriac has gained in his novels of the thirties in the way of deepening his lifelong endeavor to synthesize the artist and the Catholic in himself, he has lost somewhat of the electrifying technique he exhibited in his greatest novels of the twenties, in such burning pages as *Le Baiser au Lépreux*, *Genitrix*, *Le Désert de l'amour*, and *Thérèse Desqueyroux*. He wrote in a concentrated biting style, echoes of which certainly appear in these later works, but they are more diffuse, more indirect, one would almost say, wordy. However, it is always a great experience to read the works of a man who has spent his career demonstrating the problems of the Catholic novelist; of a truly great artist who has learned how to incorporate the spirit of Christ, a hatred for sin (and this stands out on every page of his later works), and a reaching for the Christ Incarnate, the palpable and loving God of the Gospels. The dénouement is quiet, and as Rose Revolou leaves her home because

her peasant sister-in-law cannot stand her presence, we sense a true and deep feeling of renunciation and inner peace.

The Unknown Sea, published in French as *Les Chemins de la mer*, is not one of Mauriac's greatest achievements in technique; in it he juggles too many characters; it contains the germs of several novels, and he is too anxious to pick apart and analyze each character to the last detail. At the moment when Mauriac is becoming a bit old-fashioned among the French reading public, the American public is finding him a new discovery, a new experience of the secret ways of sin and grace and Christ's vigilant presence in the souls of men.

—RUSSELL WOOLLEN

The Catholic University

Giulio Salvadori, *La Vita e L'Opera Letteraria*. By Enrica Mascherpa. Albrighi & Segati: Milano.

There are many poets in Italian literature, and many saints in the history of Italy, but there are not many poets who are also saints. To find such a combination is indeed rare, and, as it happened in the case of St. Francis of Assisi and of St. Philip Neri, the saint will overshadow the poet. Giulio Salvadori, of whose life and literary works Prof. Mascherpa has made such an exhaustive study, is one of those exceptional Italians, a man who set his artistic ideal to the pattern of Christ, and who kept true to it in all the manifestations of his life.

This is a time for summing up, for looking back on the literary scene of the end of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th, of examining the currents and the movements of that time, of attempting to find an explanation for the literary patterns of the half century that was to follow. Salvadori who was a friend and companion of D'Annunzio in the gay and pleasure seeking Byzantine group in the eighties, and who for a while tried with the naturalistic school

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to reconcile art with science, and who, after his "conversion" proceeded lonely and determinedly along his road to Christian perfection, is here studied by Prof. Mascherpa and recognized as one of the most powerful poets of Christianity.

Born in 1862 near Arezzo, in that part of Tuscany so near to the land of St. Francis, Salvadori felt very early the influence of this intensely religious province of Italy, where nature itself seems to direct man's thoughts toward Heaven. He came early to Rome, where he spent the greatest part of his life, and where he died in 1928.

While he was at the university, he fell in with that literary clique that gravitated around the editor Sommaruga, publisher of two periodicals, the *Domenica Letteraria* and the *Cornica Bizantina*. The title *Bizantina*, inspired by a verse of Carducci, stood for rebellion against the literary trend of the time, a weak and watered romanticism, that had not understood the spirit of the newly acquired capital of Italy, and "to those who had asked for Rome, had given a Bysantium." During this period, that Salvadori calls "a quarter of an hour that lasted three years," and that "opened with the popularization and nationalization of the art of Carducci, and closed with the explosion of D'Annunzio, that brought the magnificence of byzantinism into the entire civilized world," Salvadori already felt confusedly that in the group, in which, as Croce says, "young and old wore the same badge of modernity, but whose influence was not always a healthy one" there was a great desire for pleasure and luxury, and lack of moral scruples.

He had been captivated by Carducci's *Odi Barbare*, with their exaltation of the ancient glories of Rome, and evocation of the classical world, and by Carducci's *Canto dell'Amore*, with its poetic rendering of the beauty of the Umbrian land, and had also been bound to him by that great personal admiration that all the

young poets felt for the bard of the epic past of Italy; but soon Salvadori felt that Carducci's conception of the destiny of Italy was too pagan, and that his interpretation of Rome's past centered too much on her classical beauties. Carducci had sung the Rome of the Caesars; D'Annunzio began to sing at that time the Rome of the Popes, not however in a religious sense, but according to the vision of his voluptuous imagination, using churches for the splendid settings of his love scenes, and using liturgical themes in a very profane way. This "byzantine" period, that Croce has described so well, is studied by Prof. Mascherpa in its relations to Salvadori, and we are made to see how this young poet, who, too, was in love with Rome, saw this city in a very different light.

He wrote that "in Rome he had felt his heart swell, and that he had found his way to peace." For him Rome was not a strange mixture of opposite civilizations, as Carducci had found it to be, but it was the shining point in which two spiritual lights, different in appearance, but deeply similar, had met, and had fused, irradiating new light. He saw the profound connection between the ancient pagan world, and the new Christian one, and in the first, with Virgil as a prophet, he saw the preparation for the second, redeemed by Christ. In this conviction he is the disciple of Dante, whose works were already at that time the object of his critical study and whose influence became so great on Salvadori. Prof. Mascherpa tells us that in one of his poems of this earlier period, *Selvaggia e Beatrice*, that remains one of his best, Salvadori had revealed his spiritual drama, the battle of the soul between the tyranny of the senses, symbolized by *Selvaggia*, and the freedom of the spirit, symbolized by *Beatrice*, his ideal of beauty. It was a very real drama, taking place in Ascoli, the quiet city of the Marches, where he had obtained a teaching position, having broken with the *Bizantini*, in

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1884. His ideal of womanhood becomes clear and fixed within him in Ascoli; it is the ideal of the woman angel of the poets of the Dolce Stil Nuovo and of Dante. This ideal of woman, who reflects, as it were, God, and through whose love man can climb up to God, as the *stilnovisti* had seen it, was met by Salvadori in a real woman, in Ascoli. This "woman of Ascoli" was married, and the mother of several children. Salvadori saw that a sordid episode of sin and destruction of a family would hardly have fitted his conception of love. His early religious training, the example of his saintly mother, the study of Dante's drama, the religious ideal that he had never forsaken but from which he had momentarily deviated in Rome, the writings of Fogazzaro—of whom he says "a man with a warm and passionate heart who needed love, who needed a woman in order to rise to God, to be inspired and to work, gave me the example of renunciation in order to obey God, and helped me when, in the youthful desire of life, in the selfishness of a sinful love and of a rebellious pride, I thought and believed that passion cannot be conquered"—all these influences helped him to predispose his soul to grace and directed him to what he called not a "conversion," but a "return" to God. In a dramatic break with his love, his career, his past, on Good Friday 1885 he entered in his new life.

"Salvadori's secret is in his conversion," wrote Gallarati-Scotti, and Salvadori, whose banner had been: "to renew oneself or to die," after his "return" writes: "the germ of renewal is in God." From now on, all his activity as a poet, a teacher, a critic, a social worker, will be in the light of his conversion. He has finally found an explanation for art. He writes: "Art must be a part, and a great part, of the common work of mankind, it must be of such kind as to be generally accepted as answering a real and capital need of mankind, a spiritual force that illumina-

ates, purifies and mirrors human life, and in it, the whole nature. As such, art can be only essentially religious, and therefore essentially Christian." A broad concept, as we can see, to be understood to embrace the activity of all, and not to be restrictive or partisan in its interpretation. Art in his times is at the antipodes of Christianity, and he dreams of a renaissance of the Christian spirit in art, so that it may fulfill its true mission, and be, in Salvadori's original use of the term, *civile*.

This word *civile*, untranslatable in this particular meaning of "bearer of civilization," appears as the title of Salvadori's book of poems, *Il Canzoniere Civile*, published in 1889. In examining it, Prof. Mascherpa stresses the point that the central concept of this work is man seeking redemption; Salvadori is not an innovator, he is, as he says, a follower of the Christian tradition, a member of that spiritual family to which belong Dante and Manzoni, although his debt to Carducci in the technique of his meters is evident. His aim is the exaltation of Christ, supreme ideal of perfection, from whom every form of artistic beauty draws its inspiration even if the artist realizes this only dimly, or even denies it. The *Canzoniere* is *civile*, because it celebrates the highest points of the history of civilization, whose principal factor is Christianity, be it pre-Christian, or Christian civilization.

Salvadori's inspiration is essentially lyrical, and he does not give to his concepts the humanity with which Dante clothed his vision, but uses vague and mystical terms. His poetry it at its best when it describes nature, that he loves with St. Francis's all-embracing understanding, but sometimes he attains such heights of mystical inspiration, that bring to one's mind Jacopone da Todi:

Fammi scoppiare il cuore,
Fammi toccare il fondo del dolore!
Sol nella morte é amore.

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While Prof. Mascherpa does not attempt in her book an analysis of Salvadori's poems, limiting herself to point out that his art is at its best in the sonnets, which is conceded by all the critics, Croce included, there is no doubt that a critical study would be very useful. It has not been attempted so far, to my knowledge, although Carlo Calcaterra in 1938 published *The Best Poems of Giulio Salvadori*.

In the *Ricordi dell'Umile Italia*, published in 1918, Salvadori included many poems of the *Canzoniere*, omitting however the philosophical introductions that accompanied them. This appellation of "humble" given to Italy, had already been used by Virgil, Dante and Tommaseo, the poet and philosopher of Italian Romanticism, to whom Salvadori felt he owed so much. Humble is Italy, Salvadori explains, because obedient to God, and faithful in working with Him to bring about His kingdom of justice. Italy's real greatness, that is to say the spiritual one, is given to her by her humility. Already in the *Canzoniere* he had pointed to Italian sanctity as to the main factor of her civilization. Here, in speaking of the cities of Italy, he does not find motive for admiration in their splendid palaces, but rather he points to the cradle of Italian civilization, the Umbrian region, where, since the very earliest times, today as then, the austere mother sits at the fireplace spinning.

The studies to which Salvadori devoted his whole life, as a critic and a professor of Italian literature, first in Rome, then as the head of the Italian department at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Mi'an, with particular regard to Dante, St. Francis, Manzoni and other great Italian poets, became a matter of poetry in his verses. It is generally recognized that he is a better poet than critic; the truth is, as Prof. Mascherpa points out, that he is a poet even when he is a critic, and when he is confronted by such authors as

Dante and Manzoni, whose dramatic experience, love for an angelic woman, conversion, complete submission to God, represent so well his own experience, he cannot help interpreting them subjectively, sometimes so much so, that instead of a critical value, his studies become important from an autobiographical standpoint.

From Prof. Mascherpa's book we learn that if the artist, according to Salvadori, must be a mystic and an ascetic, reproducing first in himself the Eternal Model that he contemplates, he must then pass to the practical expression of the truth that he has contemplated, through the spoken word as a writer. At the same time he must, through love, make others part of himself; since the artist must study men, he will not be able to do so without being led to help them. This is the "practical art of the word," the social action, both spiritual and corporal.

The remarkable fact, the striking realization that one has in reading this *manifesto*, the deep meaning of which is that "the artist must represent the ideal not only as perfection of life to which man should aspire, but also as perfection of a life that one can attain, representing it in himself, in his own life, considered as a work of art," the striking realization, is, that Salvadori really lived his ideal. Unique, in the midst of the scepticism, materialism, hypocrisy, that pervaded literature in his time, he lived his ideal not only as an artist, but as a teacher, and, in the "practical action of the word," he not only achieved a high rank by his writings on the social problems of today, but he spread his charitable work in every direction, bringing help to the destitute, the orphans. His *Unione per il bene*, a society of men and women whose aim was the social renewal of Italy, and whose monthly publication, *L'Ora presente*, numbered among its collaborators such men as Fogazzaro, Sebatier, Father Semeria, was the temporary realization of his plan

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of gathering together Italian artists, in order to prepare a Christian renaissance in Italy. If the *Ora presente* lasted only three years, its practical manifestation, the Union of S. Lorenzo, devoted to helping the destitute of that section of Rome, lasted about thirty years, and produced innumerable other organizations of the same kind.

Twenty years have passed since Giulio Salvadori's death. His voice had been an obscure and lonely one during his life, but his influence has worked in the minds and hearts of scores of students and friends. Even if times had been more favorable, his desire for anonymity would have made it difficult to give him his due in life. When he died, many voices were lifted in praise, some in books, many more in that "third page" of the Italian daily papers, that is traditionally reserved to literature. Now, those voices are lifted again, as the cause for Salvadori's beatification is in progress, and since Prof. Mascherpa's book, there have been, especially after this war, several publications of Salvadori's social and religious writings. Slowly but surely his whole personality is emerging, to take a place in that record of "Italian sanctity" that he so fervently had exalted. Prof. Mascherpa's book remains a fundamental study of the personality of Salvadori, and a source of significant information, much of which is available for the first time, as the extremely rich production had to be searched for in periodicals and daily papers throughout the years. It is to be hoped that in a second edition, in addition to the rich bibliography of Salvadori's work, also a table of authors who wrote about him may be given, listing all that precious material that is presented now only in footnotes.

It is also to be hoped that Salvadori's writings may soon be made available to the English-speaking public, so that his "Franciscan Catholicism, in perfection of

Beauty, Truth and Justice" may be known, and his mission of "worker of the word" may continue on this side of the ocean.

—REGINA SORIA

College of Notre Dame of Maryland

Der Kranz der Engel (The Wreath of the Angels). By Gertrud von le Fort. Benziger.

The solemnity of an occasional pastoral letter does not always appear necessary to convey to the Christian world of today the spiritual plight of humanity and the responsibility it must shoulder, both individually and *in toto*, under the leadership of God's chosen men and with the cooperation of the lay workers in the vineyard. Therein rests the survival. The implications are of a tremendous scope. Nobody can deny them, least of all the dark forces who so eagerly seek to deny the existence of the powers above. Many have been the voices, but no one has spoken of the Church, its urgent need, its momentous tasks, in a more convincing manner than this convert, often referred to as the "theologian among the poets of our times," Gertrud von le Fort. But she is more than a dispenser of ecclesiastical wisdom; hers is also the gift of prophecy. Her very works, through more than two decades, give eloquent testimony of a Catholic woman's extraordinary insight and clearness of perception such as could not be dimmed by the noises of the battlefields and global carnage. Whether she sings her *Hymns to the Church* (1924), even before she embraced the Faith, whether she tells the story of *The Pope from the Ghetto* (1930), or writes her *Hymns to Germany* (1932), or other works, *Veronica's Veil* (1928) is even more indicative of a most profound faith as the basis for a lofty mission. The urge to follow up the telling of the clash between modern paganism and Christendom amidst the ruins of 20th century Rome achieves its realization in the sequel to

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Veronica's Veil bearing the title *The Wreath of the Angels* (1947).

It matters relatively little who were the dramatis personae beside the two main characters in the first part because of their repeated reappearance in the wide-awake memory of Veronica, an orphan. She is a young convert who has grown up in and between two different worlds of rich and perilous contrasts, but is now transferred with them into the romance of the Heidelberg after the first World War. In dealing with the problems of our day this novel might easily find its setting, with certain changes but identical though more aggravated perplexities, in our very present. The symbolism of the first book continues to be intensified within the environment of the city of Eichendorff and Holderlin. One senses the larger, tragic frame of Germany beyond the charm of ivy-covered ruins and dreamy towns, the spell of its dark forests and fragrant meadows, the melody of bubbling fountains, and the rumble of a gentle river. Veronica is in love with all this, but above everything else, with God. Concentrated in one person she sees heathenism ride on in its attack against man's higher ideals and the laws set down by the Supreme Master. With this one person she decides to engage in an almost superhuman struggle the outcome of which, she feels, is not guaranteed in man's innate weakness but in God's grace.

This is the story of a great grace, not in one of the sacraments but in their totality. Thus alone can and must she live her life of devotion to one cause only. Her profound religious faith and strength of conviction suffer the fullness of spiritual action in the presence of her childhood friend, Enzo. His background is also Rome. Yet, in him is represented the city that was doomed because of its blindness. The war has further undermined the young poet's belief and brought more disillusionment to his troubled soul. His thoughts of Veronica when he lies

seriously wounded within the grasp of death are united with her simultaneous prayer for him. When they finally meet again in the house of her guardian, a university professor, their way touch, as if led by destiny, never to part again. This wish is confirmed by the presence of two angels above her bed, holding a wreath, a decoration duplicated on an arch of the old castle. "What is mine is yours" symbolizes the indissoluble union of two beings bearing the garland of love. So Veronica thinks in her innocence and purity. Enzo, portraying sheer will power and cold calculation, is possessed with a fanatic's idea of a mission of his own. In his brain is bred a vague, new myth, of a country bare of tradition, stripped of religion, devoid of a concrete future, the work of an intellect without heart and soul.

Enzio's demonic iconoclasm shows off our culture's chaotic condition in shrill chiaroscuro effect. Poetry has failed him as much as science has failed mankind by the creation of more inhuman wars instead of their prevention. His own inner weakness casts him into a great "metaphysical lonesomeness" and a morbidly growing pride, an illness which requires in an increasing measure her attention, her love pushing aside her tenderly cherished plan to take the veil after a brief contact with the world through the pages of her guardian's brilliant book of knowledge and strict reasoning. Nobody needs help more than Enzo. She is forever determined to "take her soul like a little light into her hand to show his soul the way." It is her desire to teach him to love God through her, while she is fully aware that the salvation of his soul can be brought about only by the supernatural outlook toward evil as something not to separate oneself from, but to remain at its side, according to Father Angelo's mystic words that the believing members must fully share in the communion of love

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with the unbelieving, a dangerous attitude from a merely human point of view.

In the face of Enzo's stubborn refusal to have their early union sanctioned by the Church in the mutually conferred sacrament she throws scruples and warnings to the winds and seemingly consents to selling her soul to the arch enemy of Christ to win his most precious possession from within by virtue of implicit faith and undaunted courage. This sacrificial plan of vicarious expiation fires Enzo's passion and fanaticism to the limit of personal self-interest. The nihilistic vacuum he has conjured up for himself and his best friend and saddest victim eventually snatches the latter into the darkness of self-destruction. Enzo idly stands by until his heartlessness and open rejection of the need of grace for the dying man causes the horror-stricken witness to collapse and move herself to the gates of death.

One would like to think Veronica's mission completed in its first phase when what seemed like defeat was turned into victory for Christ in Enzo's confession of guilt and her generous forgiveness. Nor would one be justified in calling the novel a lachrymose sequel to the story of a religious zealot with Enzo's sinister figure looming in the background ready to tear down the bridge between the will and the heart, for on it stands the intellect of the guardian whose absence is inconceivable. The maturity of perception of this leader of academic youth affords not more than an ecliptic memory of the extraneousness of his wife. Veronica's respect for the patience and fatherly attention of this noble "static Christian," his search into an appreciation of the acute problems of a starved culture in an age of disbelief find reward in the deeper understanding of the inner relationship between intellectual and aesthetic training and Christian orientation, and the realization that sacrificing God is identical with sacrificing the world. Though he may be

unable to stay its fall for lack of brute force, it will rise anew, as he expresses it, born by another generation, misunderstood and upbraided. But "are not sorrow and death the fore-runners of resurrection?" we hear the voice of the authoress inquire.

Aside from autobiographical touches, Gertrud von le Fort has definitely an important message of wide reach to give. She does this with unmatched forcefulness in a last-minute appeal to mankind. The urgency of the dilemma of our times makes Veronica tell her story, dynamic in itself, yet reduced to a minimum of action, with breathless eagerness and a remarkable restraint as to detailed description, unless it serves the objective of the divinely inspired communication by this septuagenarian. The artful work of weaving nature's pattern into the rich texture of her latest novel is accomplished by means of an untold wealth of exquisite metaphors and similes, and equalled only by the Rilke-like clarity of her absorbing language.

We hope this work will soon make its appearance in an adequate English translation.

—ANTON LANG

Georgetown University

Il mio itinerario a Cristo. By Michele Federico Sciacca. Turin: S.E.I.

Unlike other converts, Prof. Sciacca in *My Way to Christ* is purposely impersonal and describes only his intellectual evolution. This little book, to which we do not want to attribute a greater importance than it really has—the author wrote it upon request of a friendly priest and more for an apologetic purpose than out of a personal urge—may well serve as an introduction to his other publications and to his position as an exponent of Christian spirituality in Italy, i.e. of a school or rather a trend which, without being Thomistic, has the right of citizenship within Catholic orthodoxy and is looked upon with sym-

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pathy by many, who see in it a valuable effort to bridge the distance between Catholic thought and modern philosophy. The human mind is tired of its wandering, Prof. Sciacca repeats again and again, but, since the thirteenth century, it has gone a long way and does not want to renounce its achievements. Christian spirituality goes out to meet it at the point where it is now and expects to establish a contact by the way of *inwardness*, re-attaching itself to Platonic and Augustinian thought, which through Rosmini, Blondel, and so many other Catholic philosophers, has lived on to our own day.

There is much to be learned from Prof. Sciacca's intellectual adventures. They show us, first of all, how mysterious God's ways are and how strange the working of the human mind. The *Imitation of Christ*, for instance, drew him even further away, whereas the novels of Dostoevski, with their tale of misery and of sin, helped him to understand the great problem of suffering and of evil, which only Christian philosophy can explain. Or again, the writings of the neo-scholastics did much towards shaking his own idealistic position, but they did not move him so far as to adhere to their system.

Thus, apart from Rosmini's influence, which was decisive, and always taking the grace of God for granted, Prof. Sciacca's conversion may be attributed mainly to his intellectual restlessness, his constant efforts toward clearer solutions of vital problems, his sincerity to himself and others.

The philosopher's vocation has grown with him ever since. As a high school boy, he delved into books far too deep for his age. A Catholic by birth, he lost his faith at twelve, without regrets. Calling himself an "atheist" made him feel big in the eyes of his companions. Yet under his rationalistic pretense there lay hid—he recognized it later—an unquenchable thirst for God. Or else, would he have felt such interest for the moral problem, for everything connected with the person?

Hence, too, his dissatisfaction with those systems which, under other aspects, satisfied him most, as those represented by Gentile and Aliotta. His searching for a solution of the moral problem, of the problem of man, therefore, opened the way for him out of actualistic immanentism, bringing him to the conclusion that philosophy is not the conquest of the transcendental Ego, but the conquest of the sense of being incomplete, of being a creature, indebted for existence to a Higher Being. Thus he proved to himself the existence of God by an argument *ab interiore*. On the other hand, the same moral interest made him find the completion of the great gaps of ancient thought in Christian philosophy. "Hard meditation on paganism made me a Christian," he could say in the preface to his *Plato's Metaphysics*.

As pointed out above, this small book, and with it the more extensive work *Filosofi italiani contemporanei* (Milan: Marzorati, 1944), in which Prof. Sciacca and twenty-four contemporary Italian philosophers present their thought, may serve as an introduction to the writings of this distinguished Professor of the History of Philosophy at the University of Genoa and director of two important Catholic journals, *Humanitas* and *Giornale di Metafisica*. Two of his books should be of special interest to those who follow the Catholic revival: *The Problem of God and Religion in Present-day Philosophy* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1944) and *The Church and Modern Civilization* (*Ibid.* 1946). They would be well worth translation.

—MARGHERITA MORREALE

Milan, Italy

Charles Du Bos and English Literature: A Critic and his Orientation. By Angelo Philip Bertocci. King's Crown Press. \$3.75.

It is a gratifying fact that the great personality of the late Charles Du Bos (1882-1939) found its first scholarly, profound, just and sympathetic appraisal in the mono-

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graph written by an American professor of comparative literature. The method which Prof. Bertocci uses is faultless. He retraces the progress of the critic's life from Romanticism to Spiritualism and fervent Catholic faith. He does so with the aid of the works of this great critic, particularly the seven volumes of the *Approximations* and of what is published as his *Diaries*. Then he musters the critical opinions of Du Bos by a typical selection of appreciations of English literature, as the literature closest to the temper of this Frenchman who had English blood, too, in his veins. A maximum of objectivity has been guaranteed by evaluating the validity of Du Bos' positivistic adversaries and by examining the academic professional critics who worked on the same English authors whom Du Bos discussed. These critics who got their results by documentary analysis coincide in the decisive and essential points with Du Bos' ingenious intuitions.

Prof. Bertocci, furthermore, points out that Charles Du Bos, although fundamentally an aesthete, acknowledges a literary work as significant only if it shows moral and metaphysical disquietude or gives a spiritual orientation. The astonishing phenomenon is that Du Bos distills from the art-loving Walter Pater, the "angelic" Shelley, the mythical Keats—who called the world the "vale of Soul-making"—or from the "realizer of the absolute," Charles Morgan, in a provisional form that spiritual meaning which became the cause of his conversion. This conversion finally took place (July 30, 1927) when Du Bos understood that the truth of beauty and the illumination of the poet are only analogies or forerunners on a natural level of the illumination by God and Grace, Faith and Contemplation.

Thus Du Bos' conversion meant that he actually had achieved, Grace helping, his program for finding through the au-

thors he studied his own soul and ultimately God. He describes his own interior struggle between enthusiasm for art and spirituality in his careful analysis of Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*. He revealed his own self reproach of his hesitation in choosing between "Keats and Christ" in his *approximation* to Hamlet. He unconsciously revealed his own inborn sense of morality and righteousness as opposed to sin, in choosing Annabella Milbanke rather than Lord Byron. He understood his own sublimation of love and marriage from his sympathy for the poems of the Brownings. He found his own ideals of a critic in the congenial criticism of John Middleton Murry. Charles Du Bos' flaws are not passed by in silence: his lengthy quotations, his own entangled Proustian periods, his apparent egocentricity, his narrowing down of literature to "metaphysical" literature, his never harmonious overcoming of the sensuous element despite his spiritual tendency, his becoming still "narrower" after his conversion e.g. not considering any longer Pascal but Claudel as the prince of French letters, his hostility to Classicism, his doubtful attempt at a theology of literature and so on.

Some of these problems, being spiritual problems *par excellence*, in Charles Du Bos' *Itinerarium ad Deum per litteras* may interest the readers of this magazine. Bertocci himself elicits their discussion by his noble acknowledgment that Du Bos died "short of sainthood" (p.32). Du Bos' state before his re-conversion, says the author, was one of the *art pour l'art* attitudes. But it was rather the attitude of his anti-type Goethe whom he accused later of making people blind towards Christianity, the attitude of an immanent religion coming from aesthetic-intellectual comprehension:

Wer Kunst und Wissenschaft besitzt,
Der hat auch Religion.
Wer diese beiden nicht besitzt,
Der habe Religion.

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Du Bos thus was in the situation of the typical German Romantic (see p. 209) who finds God directly in significant literature and art which procures him exaltation (p.18). Even later, when Du Bos begins to wrestle desperately with Christ, he never thinks of giving up but only of sublimating this attitude and interpreting it anew. There is no doubt that Du Bos' inborn Romanticism makes him spiritually so attractive and dangerous at the same time. How did he become the radical convert then? The proximate occasion for his final conversion seems not to be his moral indignation at reading Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* in 1918, but rather a conversation about mysticism to which he listened aghast in Paris in June 1925 and by which he was so fascinated that one of his leitmotifs became *le moi du deus* (see p. 23). This leitmotif, however, became also his second temptation, the present critic would venture to say—due respect to Du Bos' spiritual stature notwithstanding. Purified to his very "source," indeed, by his great bodily and spiritual sufferings, Du Bos seems obsessed by the idea of being himself capable of experiencing the presence of God *more mystico* as he is convinced to have experienced the immanence of God in the moments of catharsis when the spark coming from his beloved authors or pictures enkindled congenial criticism and brought him peace.

Therefore also the rediscovered liturgy seems to him not only the justification for that inseparability of external beauty and spiritual experience of which he is the life-long defender. Liturgy is for Du Bos also a source of exaltation like poetry, but on a higher spiritual and supernatural level. That is the reason why Charles Du Bos is overwhelmed by his liturgical and sacramental experience to the point that he receives holy communion with tears. Bertocci is justified in recognizing Du Bos' Platonic-Petrarchian tendency to graft the spiritual immediately upon the aesthe-

tical and in speaking here of "an ambiguous perfume"; he is not justified, however, in expanding Du Bos' own words to the most unfortunate expression "the *déesse exaltantes* of the Catholic Mass" (p.29). What is certain is that Du Bos' more intellectualized friend Abbé Bremond would have asked: Is he a mystic or a panhedonist? Du Bos finds always more tender and profound words about the Christian's capacity for God; however, humanly ideal but very strong bonds link him to his wife, daughter and friends, his books and pictures and remain the objectively existent and subjectively never recognized fetters which hinder his spiritual advance into the zone of the heroic nights. They prevent him from the genuinely mystical flight to which he aspired (see pp.90-91). Is it blasphemous to say at this point that the most lovable among the Catholic intellectuals of contemporary France received the radical aid of grace to break all obstacles by a somewhat premature death (1939)? Du Bos' reluctance to sever radically the ascetical domain from the aesthetical led him to the confusion of sublimation and mysticism. Therefore still in his latest phase Du Bos considered literature, art and music as values to procure peace in the natural sphere. If a conflict arises he rather prefers to narrow down the range of literature to apostolic embodiments of significant beauty instead of giving literature in general its relative rank and meaning. Looking with his pure eyes at the "Divine" creation of Giorgione's Venus he still is striving for plentitude (p.142) and integration (p.166) whilst his spiritual stage rather would invite him to complete detachment.

Thus Prof. Bertocci's statement: "An ascetic might denounce as delectation a quality in Du Bos' enjoyment of sensation" really may be extended to an objective criticism but only for Du Bos' situation short of death. In accordance with Prof. Bertocci this criticism of the

spirituality of Charles Du Bos does not overlook at all the moral grandeur of the French critic: Du Bos with truly apostolic zeal now tries to save his literary friends and takes them seriously to task if they forget "la primauté du spirituel." André Gide is a particular object of his charitable concern. And still, what he has to tell him, is told in terms of literary criticism. For Charles Du Bos remained to his death unshaken in his conviction that there is something like a providential literary vocation, which concerns not only the poets, but also the novelists, and last but not least the critics like himself.

This is Charles Du Bos as he is almost perfectly sketched by Prof. Bertocci and as he stands again due to this competent evocation before the present reviewer as he stood before him in his Parisian private library in 1932 with "An almost morbid sensibility, in intense emotional nature, an indefatigable seriousness, an absorption in an ideal of perfection (pp. 190-91) [and that kind of] love which makes goodness natural (192), a creature of tension (57) [with] a sensitivity to the existence and the demands of others raised to the point of mysticism (207), a witness to the spirit (8)".

—HELMUT HATZFELD

The Catholic University

Florilegium Mariae. Edited by Benjamin Francis Musser. N. H.: Manchester: The Magnificent Press.

This anthology is unique. It fits into none of our modern anthological categories, even those of Marian literature of which recent years have given us so rich a flowering. Its literary ancestry must be traced back to the *florilegia* of the Greek catenae distinguished by their grouping around some chosen subject a series of representative texts, preferably brief excerpts from Scripture and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Mr. Musser's subject is the Mother of God. Around it

he clusters quotations from "ancient and medieval and modern and contemporaneous sources" under fifty-four headings which should serve the reader as "new avenues down which to run to meet her." One cannot call it an anthology of Marian literature—except in a very broad sense—nor of Marian doctrine, nor of Marian devotion; it is rather all three and is offered as its compiler's personal tribute to Mary through whom the grace of Catholic Faith came to him "as a lad in a Protestant seminary."

Though a labor of love this compilation must have been a staggering task and one covering many years. To attempt to catalogue its contents would exhaust the space of a review, for it ranges all the way from texts of *Genesis* to works as modern as William Thomas Walsh's *Our Lady of Fatima*. There are excerpts from forty-nine Pontiffs—from St. Peter to Pius XII; from all twenty-nine Doctors of the Church, Scripture, the Roman and Eastern Liturgies, the Ecumenical Councils, famous controversies, Marian preachers and teachers, philosophers, theologians, saints, and scholars. If the array of names is dazzling especially so is that of the saints and scholars of religious orders. The Franciscans lead—*noblesse oblige*, for Mr. Musser is an affiliate of the Order of Friars Minor by special proclamation from its Minister-General at Rome—with some forty representatives, led by Saints Francis and Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, and a whole galaxy of brown-habited followers of the troubadour. The Society of Jesus speaks through Suarez, Saints John Berchmans and Peter Canisius, and the moderns, Fathers Thurston, Bainvel, Chandlery, Plus, Vermeersch and Léonce de Grandmaison; the Dominicans through Saints Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Vincent Ferrer, Bl. Henry Suso, and Fathers Vincent McNabb, Lawlor, and Keinberger; the Cistercians by the great St. Bernard whose name has been linked with Mary's through the centuries; the Benedictines by the

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Venerable Bede, St. Anselm, Blossius, and Doms Marmion, Zundel, and Vonier; St. Augustine is sufficient spokesman for the Augustinians, St. John of the Cross and Fr. Bruno for the Carmelites, Alphonsus Ligouri and his two modern poet-sons, Fathers Duffey and Galvin for the Redemptorists, and on down through numerous other religious orders. One or two nuns speak for their respective congregations.

There are also such expected and well known names as Cardinal Newman, Johannes Jørgensen, Father Faber, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, and Cardinals Mercier and Lepicier. Savonarola and Erasmus also claim a place, and the completely delightful anchoress Juliana of Norwich.

Nor are the poets omitted, though they appear but rarely. Dante and Chaucer are there, and the Jesuit martyr, Robert Southwell. Gerard Manley Hopkins' "The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe" is quoted completely; three stanzas of Chesterton's exquisite "Regina Angelorum," Francis Thompson's "The Passion of Mary," and Lionel Johnson's "Descant Upon the Litany of Loretto." Contemporaries include Alfred Noyes, Eileen Duggan, and Robert Farren. One misses the limpid Marian song of that incomparable Trappist, Thomas Merton, whose name will likely be linked with that of his father St. Bernard down the centuries. In a separate chapter of the book there are short extracts from Marian poems by non-Catholic writers, including Wordsworth, Shelley, Longfellow and Poe. Here too Nathaniel Hawthorne and John Ruskin furnish touching prose lines in Mary's praise.

Among the special delights of a collection such as this are the sudden surprises one comes upon among the excerpts, fresh insights one should never have were it not for the patient cherishing of such a devoted compiler. There is, for example, the exhortation of Chaplain Malone to Ameri-

can armies at the gates of Berlin, and the statement to American Catholics signed by enlisted men of the Sixth Marine Division, Veterans of Okinawa, and the Third Marine Division, Veterans of Iwo Jima.

Among the unusual items in the book is a Marian calendar which records a veritable litany of pilgrimage feasts and other commemorations of Our Lady for each month of the year—Our Lady of the Pine Tree, of the Earthquake, of the Well, of the Vintage, of the Door, of the Planting, of the Dunes, of Chains, of the Swan, of Travel, of the Oak, of the Dew, and Our Lady of the Russian shrines of Kiev and Novgorod. There is also a short calendar of great devotees of Mary, some seventy names "arbitrarily selected" says Mr. Musser, "from the annals of two thousand Christian years, plus the long previous prophetic period of anticipation." Here one is pleased to find a few of the devout women, namely, Saints Brigid, Gertrude, Juliana Falconieri, Bernadette, Catherine Labouré, Bl. Mary of Agreda, and a Flemish Carmelite recluse of the seventeenth century, Mary of St. Teresa.

Particularly rewarding are the numerous quotations from the Eastern liturgies in which Our Lady has so large a part; the Greek, Byzantine, Arminian, and Slavonic are represented, and a selection from the *Akathistos Hymn*. There are also the antiphons, the sequence, "Stabat Mater," and a number of hymns from the Roman Breviary and the Little Office.

This treasury of texts and excerpts, brief as each individual one is, are nevertheless long enough to make one wish to turn to the sources, which is what Mr. Musser would have us do. An indefatigable labor and research has gone into the making of this collection. It should be at hand for ready reference in every library.

—SISTER M. THÉRÈSE, S.D.S.

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Both Prof. Vanduinkerke's and Dr. Westerlinck's articles were transmitted to the editor by the Very Reverend Canon Paul Sobry, of the University of Louvain; he is at present Exchange Professor at the Catholic University of America and has been very active in European academic life and is well known for his scholarship and editorial work.

REV. RUSSELL WOOLLEN is on the faculty of Catholic Sisters' College of the Catholic University of America and he is the author of a dissertation on Mauriac.

Mlle. Primrose Du Bos, daughter of Charles Du Bos, is continuing the apostolic work of her father by directing a small book shop, *Librairie Anglaise*, 42 rue de Seine, Paris VIe. Mademoiselle may import English books into France only on condition that she export French books. We hope that some of our readers may wish to place orders with this great friend of the French Revival.

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The article entitled "The Catholic Renaissance Society: Its Past and Future," by Mother Grace, O.S.U., of the College of New Rochelle, which appeared in the Autumn 1948 number of *Renaissance*, has been reprinted in *Tradition and Progress*, Vol. VIII, Jan. 1949, pp. 35-40.

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